

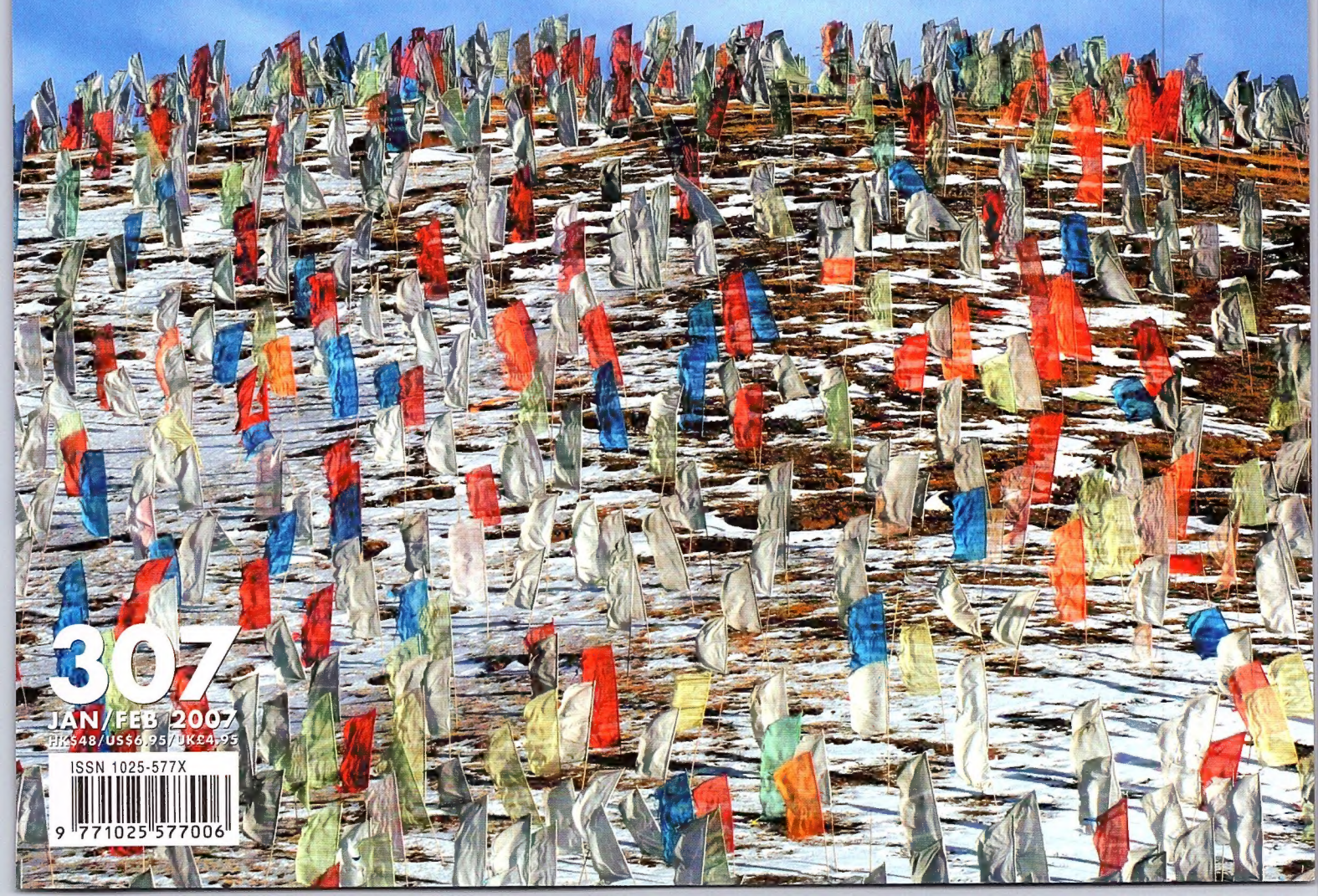


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TOURISM

Voices of the YANGTZE, YELLOW & LANCANG RIVERS

Interview with the
Lonely Planet Founders



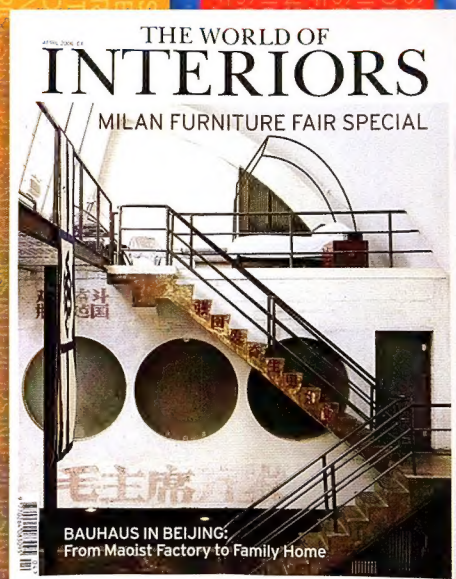
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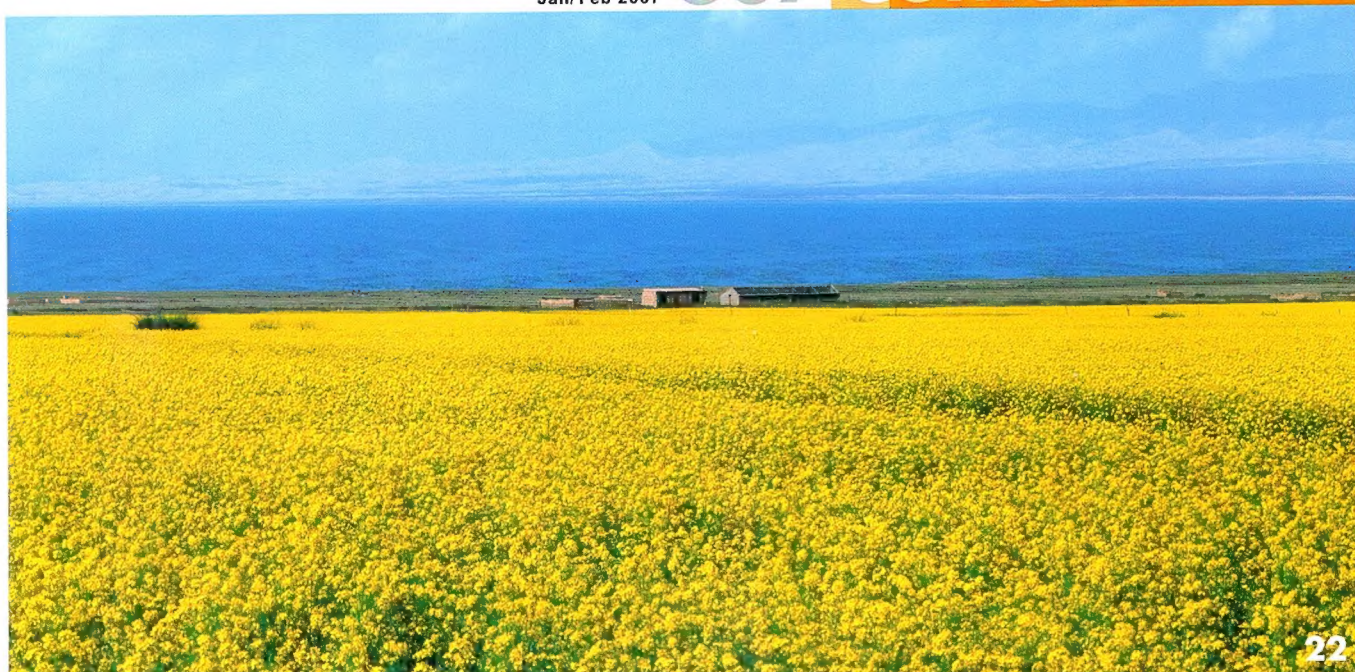
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Feature Story

San Jiang Yuan — Beauty and Sorrow

Photos & Article • Zheng Yunfeng, Ma Yiu Chun, Xu Gang Edit • Beth McNeilly

If you know nothing else about San Jiang Yuan, you should at least know that the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers all spring from here. For the past 20 years, however, San Jiang Yuan's natural environment has been deteriorating gradually.

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Profile

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Special Themes

Rejuvenation in Hong Kong & Macau Article • yuki ROUGE

Having no idea to pass the long holidays? How about learning *kungfu*, visiting a wetland park, or dine and accommodate in style? The destinations are nowhere but Hong Kong and Macau!

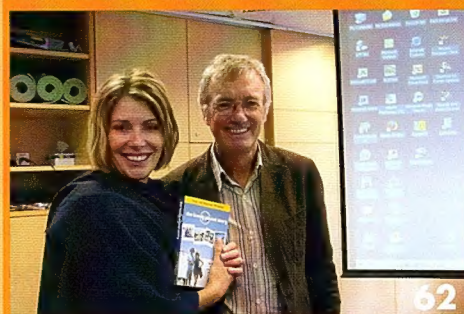
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City Snaps

A Tale of Three Cities — Chengdu, Nanjing, Ürümqi

Photos & Article • Suzan So, Xie Guanghui, et al

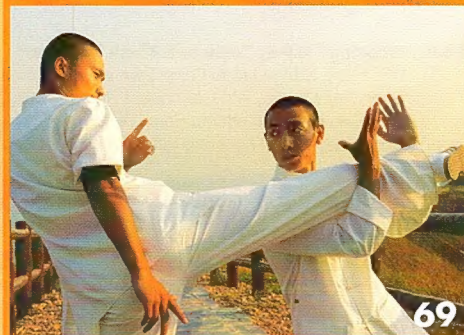
What are the common place of these three places — Chengdu in Sichuan, Nanjing in Jiangsu, and Ürümqi in Xinjiang? The answer is they are historical capital cities which have modernised in these years while keeping their own characters.



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Appreciating the city from the exclusive Club Lounge

range of treatments at I-Spa includes jet lag revival treatment, traditional foot reflexology, anti-oxidant rejuvenating facials and many more.



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Discoveries

Through the Eyes of Farmers

Article • Sun Min (photos courtesy of Greenpeace China)

Under the guidance of Geng Yunsheng, a professional photographer from Yunnan, five farmers took many amazing pictures over a year's time, documenting the most authentic Chinese farming village life.

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Third Time to the Altun Mountains

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People on the Range — The Tuwa

Photos & Article • Du Dianwen

Some 2,000 Tuwa live deep within the Altay Mountains in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. They have their own unique culture, speak the ancient Turki language, live in log homes, and survive on herding and nature's bounty.

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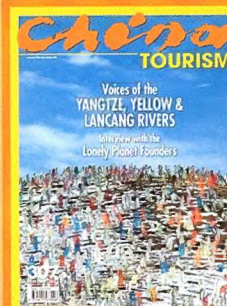
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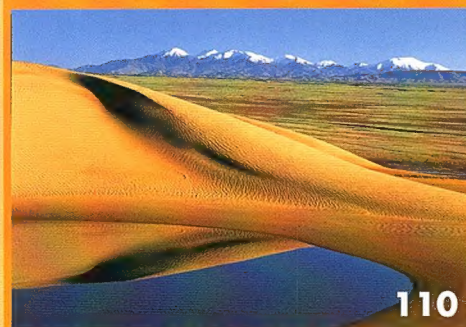
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Cover: Prayers flags on the hill.
(by Ma Yiu Chun)



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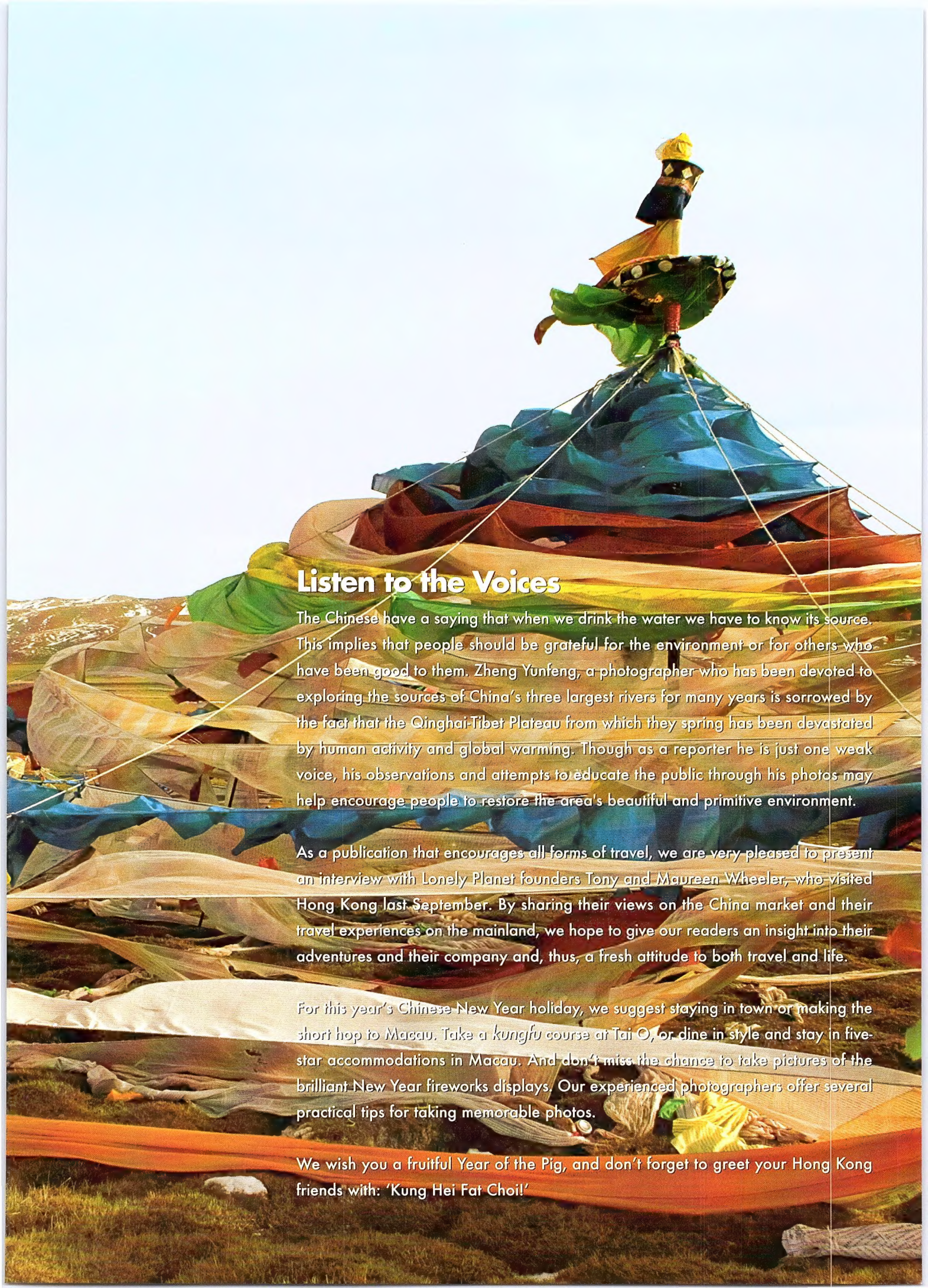
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No.307 Jan/Feb 2007

FROM THE EDITOR



Prayers streams in San Jiang Yuan. (by Ma Yiu Chun)



Listen to the Voices

The Chinese have a saying that when we drink the water we have to know its source. This implies that people should be grateful for the environment or for others who have been good to them. Zheng Yunfeng, a photographer who has been devoted to exploring the sources of China's three largest rivers for many years is sorrowed by the fact that the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau from which they spring has been devastated by human activity and global warming. Though as a reporter he is just one weak voice, his observations and attempts to educate the public through his photos may help encourage people to restore the area's beautiful and primitive environment.

As a publication that encourages all forms of travel, we are very pleased to present an interview with Lonely Planet founders Tony and Maureen Wheeler, who visited Hong Kong last September. By sharing their views on the China market and their travel experiences on the mainland, we hope to give our readers an insight into their adventures and their company and, thus, a fresh attitude to both travel and life.

For this year's Chinese New Year holiday, we suggest staying in town or making the short hop to Macau. Take a *kungfu* course at Tai O, or dine in style and stay in five-star accommodations in Macau. And don't miss the chance to take pictures of the brilliant New Year fireworks displays. Our experienced photographers offer several practical tips for taking memorable photos.

We wish you a fruitful Year of the Pig, and don't forget to greet your Hong Kong friends with: 'Kung Hei Fat Choi!'



Feb ~ Mar

Sichuan

Zigong Lantern Festival

During the festival, outstanding samples of China's traditional lanterns are presented. 'Dragons' made of porcelain dinner sets, 'peacocks' made of glass bottles, and bamboo, silk and paper lanterns will also be on display. Tourists may also enjoy various commodity exhibitions and trade fairs.



Now ~ Feb 25

Hong Kong

Robot Dream Exhibition

The exhibition showcases lots of newest robot models. There are robots of wildlife and insects, and the lively female robot Actroid-DER will be the largest focus. A life with robots is not a dream anymore. Website: www.robotdream-expohk.com

Now ~ Feb 10

Hong Kong

Water Paintings of Old HK

The exhibition features the water-painting works of four local painters. The works show the old look of the territory — memorial buildings, style of life, shops, and products. Venue: Western District Community Centre, 36A Western St, Sai Ying Pun, Hong Kong Island.

Now ~ Mar 31

Hong Kong

Piracy & the World of Zhang Baozai

To celebrate the first anniversary of the Ancient and Modern Galleries, the exhibition's theme is to introduce piracy yesterday and today. A full-length reproduction of an 18-metre long Qing-dynasty scroll is shown to tell the story about the HK pirate-king Zhang Baozai (Cheung Po Tsai).

Venue: Hong Kong Maritime Museum

Website: www.hkmaritimemuseum.org

2007

JAN/FEB

Now ~ Mar 25

Hong Kong

HK World Carnival 2007

The carnival, stating to be the last show in the town, are joined by professionals from 25 countries, and has selected 30 popular rides, over 40 games for kids, youngsters and families, as well as foods and merchandise booths. There is the Giant Ferris Wheel that brings you to the top over-seeing the dazzling Victoria Harbour.

Website: www.hkworldcarnival.com

Jan ~ Feb

Jilin

Jilin Rime Festival

It can be as cold as -20~-25°C on the coldest days in Jilin, the province located in Northeast China. Yet its freezing temperatures and warm water contribute to the unique phenomenon of rime. The Songhua Lake will be an ideal place to appreciate the beautiful scenery.



Jan 13 ~ 14

Hong Kong

1st Annual Photo Equipment Flea Market

Sponsored by Hong Kong Leica Fans Club (www.hklfc.com), the market targets all photography fans. You may exchange suitable models with others, buy or sell cameras.

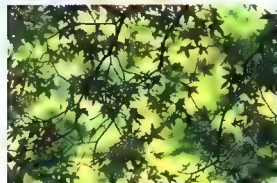
Admission: HK\$20

Venue: Hong Kong Exhibition Centre

Website: www.phoppies.com

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Shangri-La Guangzhou to Open

Developed under the cooperation of Haizhu District Government and the Municipal Government of Guangzhou, it is ideally situated in the corridor between Tianhe District, the University City and the new developments near Panyu. The hotel offers a total of 730 rooms, suites and serviced apartments with the minimum room size starting from 42 square metres. This includes 26 serviced apartments, 108 Horizon Club rooms and suites while Shangri-La Hotel, Guangzhou features no less than 65 suites ranging in sizes from 87 to 305 square metres.



Add: No. 1 Hui Zhan Dong Lu, Hai Zhu District, Guangzhou 510308
Tel: (20) 8917 8888
Fax: (20) 8917 8899
Website: www.shangri-la.com/guangzhou

Dunhuang to Build International Airport

With a 30 percent increase of the number of overseas tourists annually, Dunhuang city is planning to build an international airport. Now overseas tourists have to fly to Zhongchuan Airport in the provincial capital Lanzhou first, which is more than 1,000 kilometres away. The new airport will first open to international charter flights to and from Hong Kong, Osaka and Seoul, and China Southern Airlines, Air China and Hainan Airlines will be operating these flights.

Located in Northwest China's Gansu Province, Dunhuang city is the major stop on the historic Silk Road in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and is home to the World Heritage Mogao Grottoes and other 800 grottoes dating back to 1,600 years.



MegaBox in Hong Kong by 2007

Built with a unique core design which follows the concept of Totally Connected Modules (TCM), MegaBox is a revolutionary retail concept in the town. The mall provides a total entertainment experience, alongside a mix of attractions and shopping zones. MegaBox is targeted to open by mid-2007 in Kowloon Bay.

Magic Olympics in Beijing in 2009

In Oct 2006, Beijing has won out over fierce competition from Granada in Spain and Vienna in Austria, and to be the host city for the 24th World Championship of Magic in 2009. The World Championship of Magic, held every three years, is also called the Olympic Games of Magic for its variety of high-skill-level magic shows.

This is the first time the Federation International Societe de Magie has authorized the worldwide championship to take place in a developing country in 58 years, and marks another big cultural event in Beijing along with the 2008 Olympic Games.

"Historic Towns of China" Ends Life Membership

According to the Ministry of Construction in China, places that have been nominated as "Historic Towns of China" will not enjoy an indefinite membership on the list. If they fail to reach the relevant standard, they will be removed from the list.

Since 2003, the Ministry of Construction has nominated 80 "Historic Towns of China" scattered among 25 provinces of the country, to protect precious heritages from being destroyed by economic development. The new decision is expected to encourage more protective efforts in areas that have been included on the list.

More Open-air Theatres in Beijing by 2008

Beijing has built an open-air theatre at an entertainment ground in Shijingshan District and another at Yuting Park in Chongwen District. Construction work will begin on eight more such theatres.

According to the municipal culture bureau, cultural service centres in every urban community can be used for artistic performances, film projections, reading, training, keep-fit and other recreational and entertainment purposes. A movie ticket in the capital now costs 30~80 yuan (3.8~10.1 U.S. dollars), and sometimes as much as 100 yuan (12.7 U.S. dollars) for some imported blockbusters.



China and Belgium to Protect Terracotta Warriors

Chinese and Belgian scientists have renewed a joint project to preserve China's 2,000-year-old Terracotta Army in China's ancient capital Xi'an. According to a deal struck between the Museum of Terracotta Warriors and Belgium's Janssen Pharmaceutical Co., the latter will provide US\$1.42 million of funds, equipment and training programs to help the museum better preserve the heritage until 2010. A foundation for heritage protection and three more research laboratories will also be set up.

The terracotta warriors and horses have been eroded by mould since they were opened to tourists in 1979, a result of higher temperatures and humidity. And millions of tourists flocking to the site have caused the mould to spread faster.



Cantonese Opera to Popularise in Hong Kong

Organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Third Cantonese Opera Day was successfully held on 26 Nov, 2006. The event included the parade and dance performance of all Cantonese opera performers, autograph sessions of famous opera figures, an exhibition, games stalls and a chance to try on opera costumes. In order to further popularise this Guangdong traditional culture, lots of interesting activities related to Cantonese opera will continued to be held in 2007, such as "Cantonese Opera Open Stage", "District Cantonese Opera Parade", and "Cantonese Opera Excerpts 2007". For more information, tourists can click to the website: www.lcsd.gov.hk

Hong Kong to Refresh Mui Wo Town

Mui Wo in Hong Kong's Lantau Island is an historic township endowed with a rich cultural heritage and unique features. Recently the Planning Department plans to enrich Mui Wo's rural character to make it a leisure centre.

In the short and medium term, Mui Wo Old Town's waterfront and streetscape will be enhanced with traditional streetlights and paving. Mui Wo Town Square will be extended to offer alfresco dining, a flea market, festival performances and other local events, alongside shops and sitting-out areas with lush greenery. There will be a waterfront promenade south of the ferry pier along the seawall. A bicycling track and a heritage trail will connect scattered points of interest in the Mui Wo hinterland.

In the long term, more recreational facilities, like a marina and watersports centre, a botanical garden and nature education centre, a local galley at Yuen's Family Compound and the reopening of Silvermine Cave, have been proposed to boost Mui Wo's recreational potential.



HK Viacom Weighing Theme Park in Tianjin

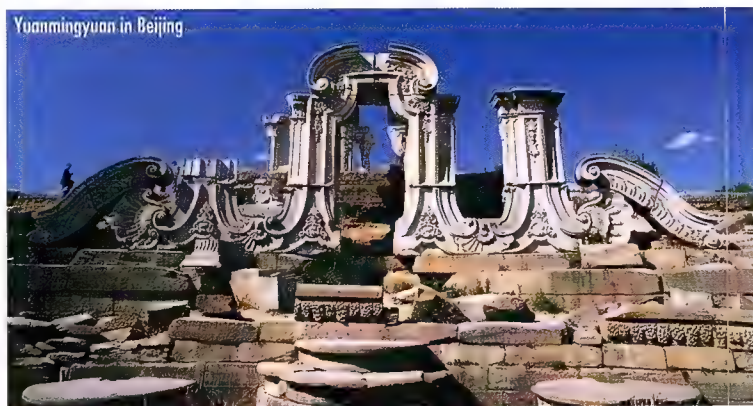
Hong Kong Viacom, which owns MTV Networks and Paramount Pictures has announced that it was in talks about a planned theme park in the Tianjin Municipality, a port and industrial city of about 10.2 million people that is 120 km from Beijing.

The Paramount Pictures-themed park would be built on a site of more than 40 sq km, bigger than the Hong Kong Disneyland. The developers are also counting on an express rail link to Beijing to bring more visitors to Tianjin by 2010.

Xi'an-Xianyang Airport Expressway

Central China's Shaanxi Province has started constructing the Xi'an-Xianyang Airport expressway, measuring 20.58 km. The project, involving a total of 2.296 billion yuan, will take two years to complete.

The two-way eight-lane expressway measures 42 to 45 metres in width with a six-metre-wide isolation belt in the centre. Cars can travel at a maximum speed of 120 km per hour on the expressway. It will be the first of its kind built in Shaanxi Province.



"New" Yuanmingyuan Garden to Appear in Zhejiang

Hengdian Group, famous for running a huge film and television complex in East China's Zhejiang Province, plans to rebuild Beijing's famous Yuanmingyuan Park. The "new" Yuanmingyuan is planned to locate near Dongyang in the centre of Zhejiang, and will be built to scale, covering an area of 350 hectares. Involving an investment of 20 billion yuan (US\$2.47 billion), it is going to be built in five years to be a multi-functional theme park.

Yuanmingyuan was the Summer Palace of the Qing Dynasty in the northwest of Beijing. Construction began in 1709 and continued for 150 years under five emperors. But it was burnt to the ground in 1860 by French and British troops.

Austrian Airlines Cuts Asian Routes

Austrian Airlines, which has terminated its services to Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Australia, has decided to further trim its services to other parts of Asia. It will axe services to Shanghai from January 7, 2007, Phuket, Mauritius, Colombo and Male from the end of April 2007 and Kathmandu from May 2007. Parallel to these route terminations, Austrian Airlines will also be trimming its long-haul fleet by two Airbus A340-300s and four A330s in 2007.



Beijing

Olympics Mascots Renamed "Fuwa"

The Beijing Olympic Organizing Committee (BOCOG) has decided to replace the name of the mascots "Friendlies" — which has aroused debates on the Internet — by "Fuwa" (Lucky Babies 福娃), which is a literal pinyin translation of its Chinese name and is more frequently used in China. All Olympic souvenirs and Olympic posters with the original mascot name "The Friendlies" have been replaced. It is generally believed that the name "Fuwa" is more accessible and easy to remember, and will help with the promotion of the Beijing Olympic mascots across the world.

The mascots of the Beijing Olympic Games consist of five cartoon figures — a fish, a panda, a Tibetan antelope, a swallow and the Olympic flame — encompassing five features of nature — the sea, forest, fire, earth and sky. Each has a two-syllable name in English, and a combination of the first syllable from each name reads "Beijing Huan Ying Ni" in Chinese, which means "Beijing welcomes you".

Aviation

E-Ticketing System Used by CATA

In cooperation with the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the China Air Transport Association (CATA) has stopped providing paper flight tickets since early October, 2006. Besides reducing the operational costs, the organization also believes that E-ticketing is convenient and time-saving for passengers as passengers can make reservations on line or by phone and check in with a ticket number. The cost of an e-ticket was about a tenth of that of a paper air ticket. IATA has also required its 261 member airlines to abandon all paper tickets by the end of 2007.

Beijing

The Westin Beijing, Financial Street Opens

The first Westin hotel in Beijing, The Westin Beijing, Financial Street has opened its doors to welcome guests in October 2006. Situated in the centre of the city with the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square to the east and Chang An Avenue to the south, The Westin Beijing, Financial Street has easy access to the city's business, shopping, sightseeing and entertainment districts, and only 40 minutes away from the airport.

The hotel is also proud to introduce China's first Westin Heavenly Spa®, drawing on modern hydrotherapy and ancient Chinese-inspired philosophy. The spa occupies a space of 2,094 square metres and with two double treatment rooms and six single treatment rooms.

Website: www.westin.com/beijingfinancial

Aviation

Air China Launches Beijing-New Delhi Flights

Air China, the country's national carrier, has recently launched direct flights between Beijing and New Delhi. Air China will operate three flights from Beijing to New Delhi on every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, using Boeing 767-200 aircraft.

China/Russia

Flight to Link Sanya and St Petersburg

The Russian Transaero Airlines has launched maiden flights between Saint Petersburg, Russia's second largest city, and Sanya, in China's island resort province of Hainan, in late October 2006. Flights are scheduled for every other Monday, leaving Saint Petersburg at 4:15 a.m. (Beijing time) and arriving in Sanya at 3:05 p.m. the same day. It will depart Sanya at 5:05 p.m. The company also plans to introduce a Moscow-Sanya-Guangzhou flight every Friday.

China/Africa

Regular Flights to Africa Opens

The China Southern Airlines has launched flights between Beijing and Lagos, the first China-Africa passenger air service by a Chinese air carrier. The flights are set to take off at 11:40 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday and arrive at 11:10 a.m. (local time) the next day. Using an Airbus 330 airliner, China Southern will link Beijing with the commercial and industrial centre of Nigeria in western Africa.



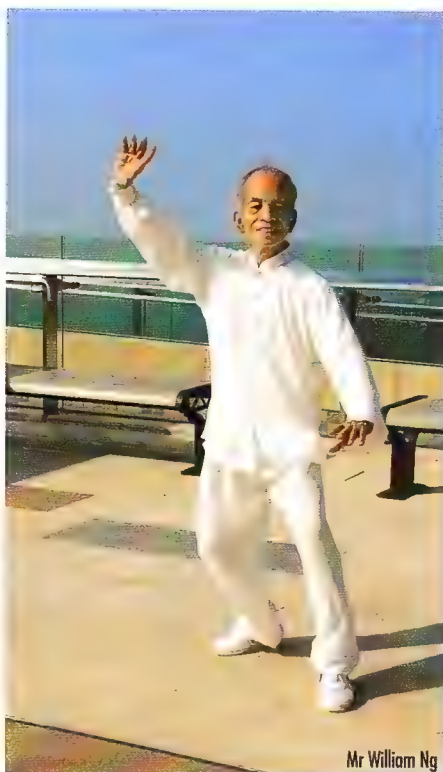
Shenzhen

Newspapers Invites Readers to Improve English Public Signs

The *Shenzhen Daily*, the only English-language daily newspaper in South China, has launched a new column, "Spot the Errors," to identify those public signs where English needs a little correction.

The municipal government's foreign affairs office, the Translators Association of Shenzhen and the *Shenzhen Daily* have already been asked to standardize the use of English in public places. For instance, Shennan Thoroughfare, the city's most important artery, has different English names on its signs, including "Shen Nan BLVD." and "Shen Nan Da Dao." Even signs at brand-new Shenzhen Metro stations can make residents confused.

The *Shenzhen Daily* welcomes readers or tourists who have spotted the mistakes to report to them via e-mail (wkang@szszd.com.cn) or fax (755) 8390-6475, better with exact location of the sign and a photograph of it enclosed.



Mr William Ng

Hong Kong

Tai Chi Classes at the Peak

Organised by the Hong Kong Tourism Board, free tai chi classes are given at the Viewing Terrace of The Peak Tower every Saturday morning between 9 ~ 10 a.m. for both residents and visitors to Hong Kong, starting from 2 December, 2006.

As the class participants practise *tai chi* on the Peak Tower Rooftop Viewing Terrace, they can also appreciate a panoramic 360-degree view of Hong Kong's magnificent skyline. The classes are hosted by Mr William Ng, one of Hong Kong's best-known *tai chi* masters, who has also performed *tai chi* before British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, during his visit to Hong Kong in November 2005.

Participants are advised to wear light clothing and the class is limited to 30 people per class. The *tai chi* classes are also disability friendly. For inquiries please contact HKTB Visitor Hotline: (852) 2508-1234

Culture

Traditional Medicine Applies for World Intangible Heritage

China is making preparations to apply for World Intangible Heritage status for traditional Chinese medicine. China will formally apply for it when the UN accepts and handles the project. Herbs with over 3,000 years of history have spread to more than 120 countries and regions. In addition, China will cooperate with foreign countries on difficult and complicated problems, including tumors and AIDS, and develop more Chinese medicine and establish clinical study centres with international influence.



Aviation

China Southern Airlines Beijing Base Opens

With a budget of more than 1.09 billion yuan (US\$136 million), the base is part of the company's strategy to expand its foothold in the north from its headquarters in Guangzhou, capital of South China's Guangdong Province.

The company planned to build up a fleet of Airbus A319, A320, A330 and A380 aircraft to increase flights from Beijing to southwest and East China, and to launch routes from Beijing to Europe and the United States.

Aviation

New Baggage Restrictions on China Eastern

China Eastern has lowered the baggage weight limit for economy class passengers between China and the US from December 1, 2006. While economy class passengers will still be allowed to check in two items, the weight limit for each bag has been lowered to 23 kg from 32 kg. Limits for first class and business class passengers are unchanged at two bags, maximum of 32 kg each. Baggage exceeding 45 kg will not be accepted for check-in.

Henan

Shaolin Martial Arts Textbook Published

The 1,500-year-old Shaolin Temple in Dengfeng city in Central China's Henan Province, is the country's most renowned home of Zen Buddhism and martial arts. However, very few of the 50,000 Kung-fu pilgrims that come from home and abroad to Dengfeng are qualified to be admitted to study in the temple, which offers classic Shaolin Kung-fu teaching.

However, basic teaching criteria for Shaolin martial arts have been compiled in a brand-new Shaolin Kung-fu textbook recently. The illustrated textbook compiled by the Dengfeng Sports Administrative Bureau comprises the basic physical exercises of Shaolin Kung-fu, 24 series of Shaolin boxing exercises and Shaolin club practices. More than 500 Shaolin Kung-fu textbooks were distributed for free to 126 government departments and companies in Dengfeng in late 2006. All martial art schools in the city will be urged to use the textbooks for teaching from 2007.



Hong Kong

Organic Food Mark Opens in Central

The first Hong Kong store of ThreeSixty, a world-renowned brand for selling organic foods and products, has opened in late November 2006. Featured brands include Wild Oats, Kiss My Face, PetGuard, Himalayan Crystal Salt, Trinity, Vital Choice Seafood, Simply Organic, etc. Add: 3/F & 4/F, The Landmark, Central, Hong Kong. Opening hours: 0700 ~ 2100 (7 days)

Taking Panoramic Photos & Shooting Fireworks

Photos by Andrew & David K. H. Ho



Panoramic photography usually refers to a photo twice as long as it is wide. Such dimensions can create a powerful and artistic visual impact.

Fun for Viewer and Photographer

Almost everybody, from professionals to amateurs, likes panoramic pictures because they afford a more spectacular view than standard sized photos. The expansiveness of a panoramic photo better relays the photographer's emotions, as it mimics our own range of sight more accurately.

Typically, the width and length of panoramic photos have a ratio of 2:3 or 3:4. For instance, 24 x 36 mm film is used in a 135 camera, while 6 x 9 cm or 4.5 x 6 cm film is used in a 120 camera. Films of 6 x 6 cm or 6 x 7 cm are also often used in a 120 camera. Although these are the most common dimensions, there is no reason to limit your work to these sizes.

How to Take Panoramic Photos

Panoramic photos require advanced photography skills. Many of my photographer friends have become addicted to this challenging yet rewarding style of photography. The following five main methods can be used for taking a

1. Dusk in Hong Kong

Clear skies are a rarity in Hong Kong these days. When the skies are clear, I stay out all day to take as many pictures as possible.

Photo parameters: 4" x 5" camera assembles 6 x 17 cm film back, 150 mm lens, ISO 100 reversal film, f16, exposes for 45 seconds

2. Northern Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula

A classic view of Hong Kong's landmark buildings taken from the Peak by a 135° swing-lens camera.

Photo parameters: 24 x 65 mm sheet film swing-lens camera, 29 mm lens, ISO 100 reversal film, 1/60 seconds, f16, hand-held shot



2





1. Macau street scene

This photo was created using the auto-link function to join three images taken by a light digital camera.

2. Yangtze River Gorges

The Yangtze River is ideal for panoramic photos. I refrained from using an ambient light filter, to enhance the contrast of light and dark.

Photo parameters: 6 x 17 cm camera, 105 mm lens, ISO 100 reversal film, 1/125 seconds, f11

3. Pagodas in Bagan, Myanmar (Burma)

Forest, pagodas, sunrise and mist compose a rich picture. I didn't have a panoramic camera on this trip, so I took two photos and linked them afterwards.

Photo parameters: 35 mm camera, 70 ~ 200 mm lens; ISO 100 reversal film, 1/60 seconds, f8

4. Morning at Toyako

Every morning I woke to the beautiful Toyako lakeside in Hokkaido. I set up my tripod the night before, so that when the sun rose the next morning, I was ready to capture its golden hues.

Photo parameters: 24 x 65 mm camera, 30 mm lens with an ambient light filter and a light orange gradation filter; 1/4 seconds, f8

5. Dawn amidst peaks

Like a chiffon scarf, a sheer layer of morning mist wraps the peaks in Yangshuo, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

Photo parameters: I took two photos with a 24 x 65 mm sheet film camera, scanned them into digital files and linked them on the computer to form this exceptionally long panoramic photo; ISO 50 reversal film force processed to one grade higher, 45 mm lens with an ambient light filter, 1/2 seconds, f8

panoramic photo:

◆ Use traditional large format cameras, such as those using 120 roll films (6 x 12 cm, 6 x 17 cm) or 135 films (24 x 65 mm), or view cameras (with models of 4" x 5", 5" x 7", or 8" x 10") that use sheet films (panoramic pictures can also be taken by adding a 120 camera film back).

◆ Cover the upper and lower parts of the lens before shooting, or cut the upper and lower parts of an enlarged normal photo. However, this can reduce the effective area of the film, or even influence the photographic quality.

◆ Scanning cameras (also known as rotating or swing-lens cameras) are specifically designed to take panoramic photos. Both 135 and 120 films can be used. The film-length of each shot depends on the design of the particular model you are using. There are also extra large format panoramic cameras with lenses capable of rotating 360°. The visual angles of scanning cameras are exceptionally wide (120°). When taking pictures with these cameras, the photographer must balance the horizontal level well or the photos will be distorted.

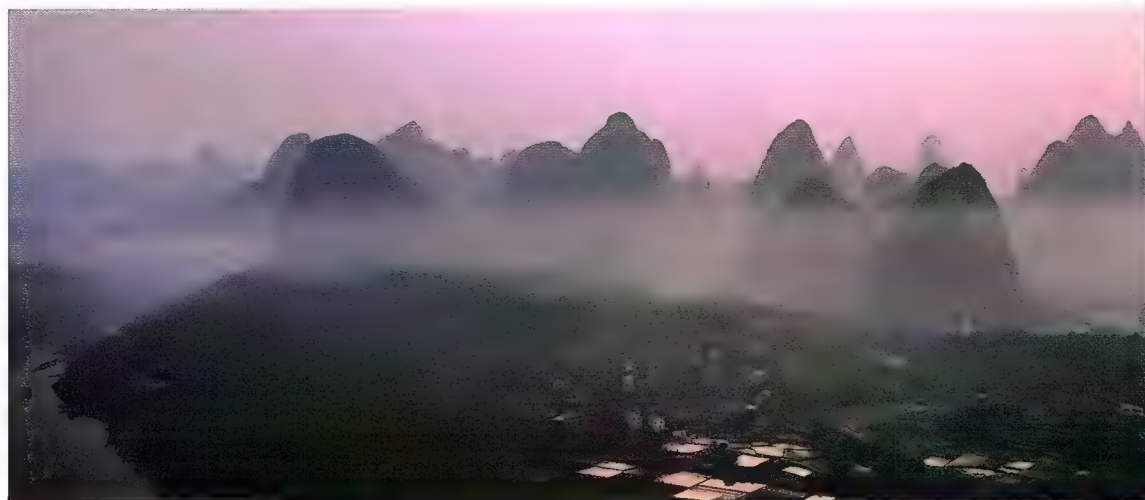
◆ A digital camera can be used to divide the scenery into sections, all of which can be shot separately. Then link the sections to form a long, panoramic photo on a computer. Some new DC models come with an auto-link function that allows photos to be linked together perfectly. However, the resolution of these images is usually not high.

◆ A traditional 135 camera may also be used to photograph your scene in sections. When the film is developed and printed, scan it into an electronic file and join the sections up together as you would with a digital camera to form a DIY panoramic photo.

Getting the Details Right

I am also fond of taking panoramic photos of different sizes. Before every trip, I prepare several standard or large format cameras. It's not easy to take a good panoramic shot. After many failures, I have learned the following from my experiences:

◆ **Selective shooting:** A panoramic photo enhances our usual perspective to create an appealing image. But don't use it as a means to an end and take panoramic photos of every scene you encounter. If you use a roll of 35 mm slide





2



3



4



5



1. Sunning the Buddha at Drepung Monastery

Grand religious activities are excellent subjects for panoramic photos.

Photo parameters: 24 x 65 mm camera, 30 mm lens with an ambient light filter; ISO 100 reversal film, 1/30 seconds, f8

2. Jubilant Dragon Boat Festival in Guangzhou

At the end of a dragon boat competition in Lade Village, Guangzhou, participants are engulfed in firecracker smoke.

Photo parameters: 24 x 65 mm camera, 45 mm lens, ISO 100 reversal film force processed to one grade higher, 1/125 seconds, f8

3. Bustling Causeway Bay

This 'continuous action' photo taken in busy Causeway Bay in downtown Hong Kong shows a typical use of a swing-lens camera. The camera is aimed and swept in the same direction as the person or object in motion to create this 'moving' picture.

Photo parameters: 24 x 56 mm swing-lens camera, 28 mm right-rotate scanning lens, ISO 100 reversal film, 1/4 seconds, f2.8, hand-held shot

film to take panoramic photos, you will only take about 19 exposures (exp) instead of 36. Thus, a bad quality panoramic photo will waste almost 2 exp. To prevent this, the viewer should shoot panoramic photos selectively, and take the time to predict and judge if the overall conditions of the scene are suitable for panoramic photography.

◆ **Balance the horizontal level:** Many panoramic photo cameras contain levelling instruments that photographers may use to test their shots. Users can also add their own levelling instrument to prevent a distorted picture. A few high-end panoramic cameras contain a level-shifting function, which eliminates the problem of distortion wherever the camera is positioned.

◆ **Stabilise the camera:** A tripod is the most effective way to do this.

◆ **Use a small aperture if possible, because:**

1. Most panoramic cameras don't have a precise focusing mechanism. Not even swing-lens cameras have buttons to adjust the focus. A small aperture can create deep depth of field and prevent the problem of being out of focus.

2. The film plane of the panoramic camera is usually longer, and the film will not be flatly placed on the film plane. As a result, it may affect the level of light sensitivity. A deep depth of field can offset this problem.

3. The four angles of panoramic cameras are wide and therefore may easily blur. Using a small aperture can increase the resolution of the four margins.

◆ **Choose the most suitable filters:**

1. Ambient light filter

The lens of a large format camera covers a large surface. When it is used with a wide-angle lens, the light entering the four angles will be one grade lower than that entering the centre. Therefore, adding an ambient light filter can balance the light.

2. Thickness of the filter

The photographer usually uses more than one piece of filter when taking pictures. Choose a thin filter to prevent creating darker angles when photographing.

◆ **Aesthetics:** This is difficult to teach, yet it is the most important aspect of any photography, as it all depends on the photographer's own artistic sensibilities. He or she has to appreciate finer photographic equipment, temper his/her own artistic judgements and be willing to break through the shooting angle at all times.





1. Hong Kong's 'Symphony of Lights' has been named the 'World's Largest Permanent Light and Sound Show' by Guinness World Records. Photo parameters: 6 x 12 cm film panoramic camera, 90 mm lens, f11 ~ 16, ISO100 reversal film. I photographed the lightest fireworks at numerous stages with a 30-second exposure.

2. Fireworks at the Hong Kong Tsing Ma Bridge inauguration ceremony. Photo parameters: 35mm camera, 24 ~ 85 mm lens, 85 seconds, f8, ISO100 reversal film

3. Fireworks alongside the Macau Tower

Photo parameters: 6 x 7 cm sheet film camera, 80 mm lens, about 15 seconds, f11, ISO100 reversal film; distribution of fireworks adjusted in post-processing. (by Keith Lee)

4. Same photo before processing





Fireworks can also make for stunning pictures. Hong Kong holds two firework shows annually over Victoria Harbour – National Day (1 Oct) and the second day of the Lunar New Year. Don't miss them!

Catch a Falling Star

In a dynamic city like Hong Kong where the nights are as exciting as the days, firework shows enhance the town's beauty. Firework bursts tend to last no more than three seconds, therefore good preparation and certain skills will help you take a good shot. Here are some hints:

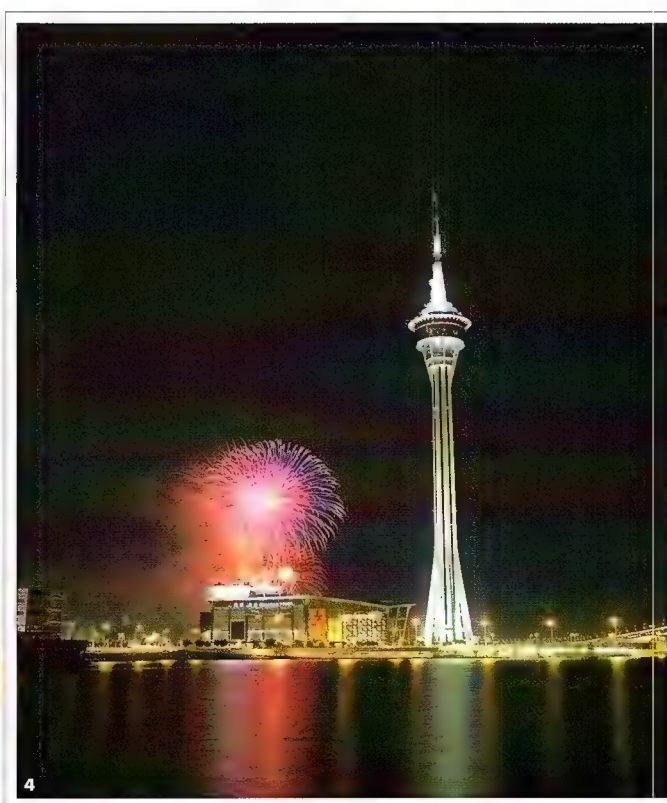
◆ **Composition:** Ideally, you need a good background behind the fireworks. If only fireworks occupy the whole picture, it will be boring. Photographing fireworks is one of the hardest tasks for a photographer, because it is very difficult to predict where they will appear. One solution is to open the shutter before the fireworks are released then cover the lens with a piece of black cardboard. When a firework burst reaches a suitable position, remove the cardboard for exposure. Avoid shooting fireworks that are too bright or too dim. Capturing 2 ~ 3 fireworks per photo is about right.

◆ **Exposure:** Consider the exposure for the general environment and the fireworks. You may want to expose several times to get different fireworks in the same image. Or you may add fireworks to a picture in the post-processing stage. The skills involved in shooting night scenes and fireworks are similar, and the photographer will need to set the exposure about one grade higher. Keep the f-number of a 135 or 120 camera at $f/8 \sim 11$ and expose for about 10 seconds so that the brightness of the buildings and fireworks will be more or less the same. If the exposure time is too short, the tracks of the fireworks may be too stumpy.

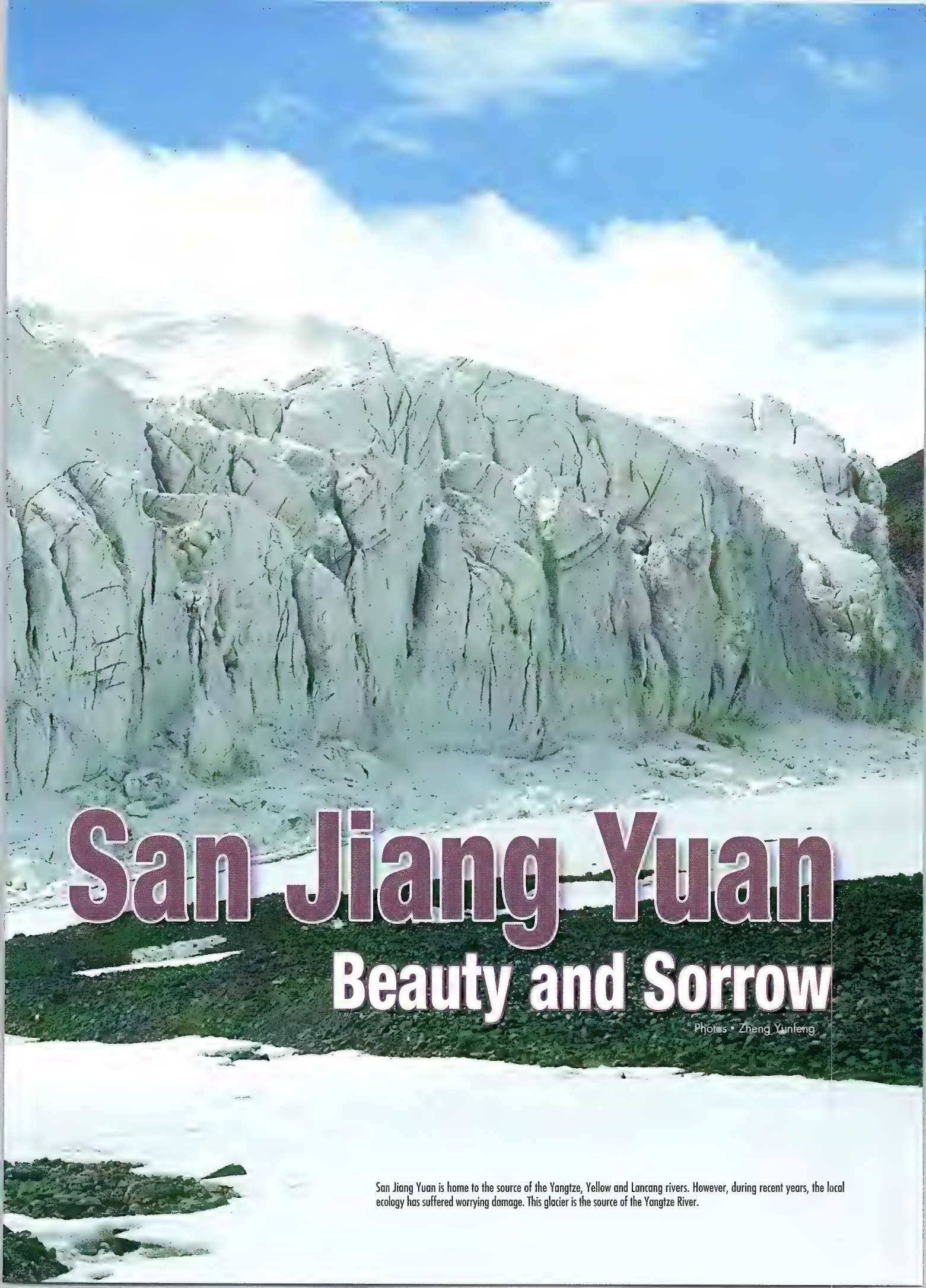
◆ **Equipment:** Where you stand to photograph fireworks basically determines which lens you should use. You may prepare a medium- or long-distance lens to 'collect' firework bursts; in addition, shutter rope, tripod, black cardboard, etc., are basic photography tools you may find useful. Take a radio along as well to kill time before the fireworks begin and to stay abreast of the latest traffic news.



Translated by Kristy Wong







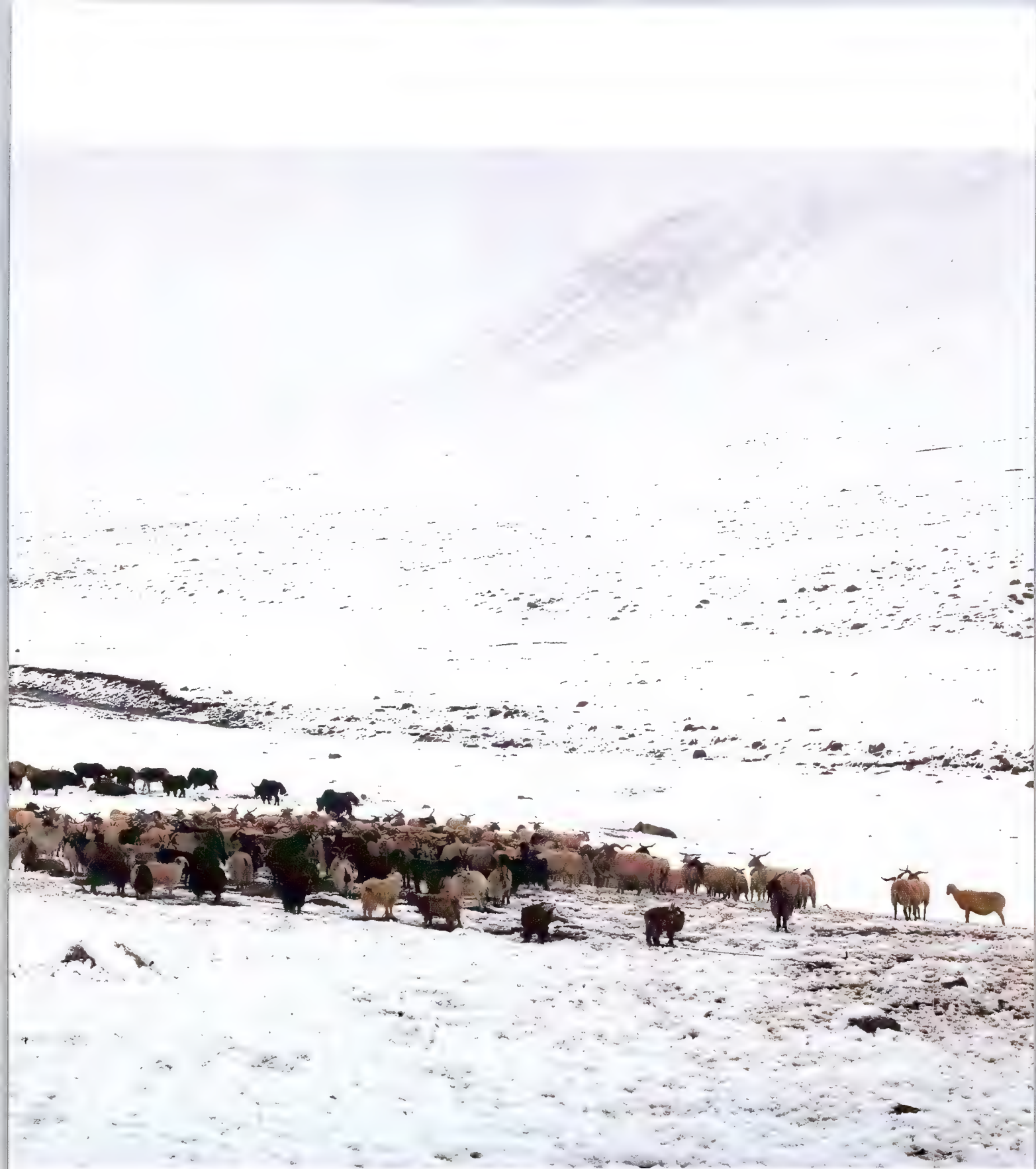
San Jiang Yuan

Beauty and Sorrow

Photos • Zheng Yinfeng

San Jiang Yuan is home to the source of the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers. However, during recent years, the local ecology has suffered worrying damage. This glacier is the source of the Yangtze River.





The Bayan Har mountain range is a watershed for China's three greatest rivers. Herdsmen face a difficult situation: the glaciers are disappearing, the grasslands are turning to desert, and their herds are on the brink of starvation.





This beautiful vista of rape flowers set against the deep blue lake will disappear soon if soil erosion and desertification are allowed to continue.

About 'San Jiang Yuan'

Photos • Zheng Yunfeng

San Jiang Yuan, literally 'source of three rivers', refers to the common source of China's Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers. In a broad sense, San Jiang Yuan is a region, a wide expanse of wilderness in northwest China that includes the Yushu and Golog Tibetan autonomous prefectures, which cover a total area of 363,000 sq km. Forty-nine percent of the Yellow River's total water inflow originates from the San Jiang Yuan region, as does 25 percent of the Yangtze and 25 percent of the Lancang. The Tanggula mountain range, with some 2,000 peaks rising more than 5,000 metres above sea level, runs across southern Yushu, which stretches for 198,000 sq km. Sacred Anyemaqen Mountain, north of Golog, is worshipped for a Tibetan god.

(A) The Yangtze

The Yangtze River's origins can be traced to the Jianggendiru Glacier on the southwest side of Geladandong Peak, the summit of the Tanggula Mountains in southern Qinghai Province. From the western highland it travels to the eastern plain and on into the East Sea at Shanghai on a long march of 6,380 km. Passing through Qinghai, Tibet, Sichuan, Yunnan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Anhui, and Jiangsu along the way, it is the longest river in China and the third longest in the world, after the Amazon and the Nile.

(B) The Yellow River

The second longest river in China, the Yellow River begins on the east slope of Gezige Mountain in the Bayan Har range in the middle of Qinghai Province. Five streams of spring water come together to form the river's headwaters, which Tibetans living along the upper reaches refer to as Maqu (Peacock River) due to their fanlike spread. One of these streams, Karchu (Copper Red River), is the main source of the Yellow River. Its own headwaters are formed from yet another five streams of spring water that cut across the mountain slope. Running southwest to northeast, Karchu grows from just one metre wide to an eventual 10 metres across. Passing through marshy Xingxiuhai Lake, the Yellow River heads east to the twin lakes of Gyaring and Ngoring. The two largest lakes in the river's entire drainage area, they cover an area of 1,400 sq km. The Yellow River continually converges with other rivers on its way east, eventually entering the Bohai Sea, at which point it has coursed for 5,464 km.

(C) The Lancang River

The Lancang River originates on a highland 4 km west of Chajiarima on the north slope of the Tanggula Mountains in northwest Zaduo County, Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province. The river stretches 4,500 km in total, the 1,162-km upper section of which is within China's boundaries. It is the largest river in Southeast Asia and the sixth largest river in Asia. From Qinghai it runs through Tibet and Yunnan before crossing the border, where its name changes to the Mekong River, meaning 'mother of all waters'. It heads south through Cambodia and plunges into the Pacific at Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The river's headwaters are a

complicated network of crisscrossing tributaries, one of which, the Za'qu River, exceeds the Zanaqu River in length and drainage area, making it the likely main source of the Lancang.

Kunlun Mountains

With the highest average altitude in Qinghai and the world, the Kunlun Mountains also cover the widest expanse of land of any range. Rising in the west from southern Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the range connects to northern Tibet while in the east it reaches to eastern Qinghai, stretching for 2,500 km. Bukadaban Peak, the summit of the Kunluns, soars 6,680 metres above sea level at the Qinghai-Xinjiang border. At Qinghai, the 1,200-km long, 60 to 120-km wide section of the range, with an average altitude over 5,500 metres, dominates the local landscape, giving Qinghai its other name: 'Province of Kunlun'.

Bayan Har Mountains

These mountains are the watershed of the Yangtze and Yellow rivers. Like a dragon at rest, the range keeps company with the awesome Kunlun Mountains. Nianbao Mountain, or Golog Mountain, is the summit of the Bayan Har range. Standing 5,369 metres above sea level where Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan provinces meet, the snow-clad mountaintops resemble white lotus flowers in full bloom. Nianbao Mountain alone has 3,600 peaks and 360 lakes of all sizes.

Anyemaqen Mountains

The Anyemaqens (also known as Dajishi Mountain or Jishi Mountain) are a branch of the Kunluns. One of the major sacred mountains in Tibet proper, the 6,282-metre summit is a permanently icy world. The mountain is a mix of sandstone, limestone and granite. Thirteen of its rugged, saw-toothed peaks average altitudes of more than 5,900 metres, while 57 glaciers grace the Anyemaqen region over an area of 125.7 sq km. Of these, Halong Glacier (7.7 km long, 23.5 sq km wide, and 1,800 metres deep) is the longest and largest glacier in the Yellow River drainage area.

Qinghai Lake

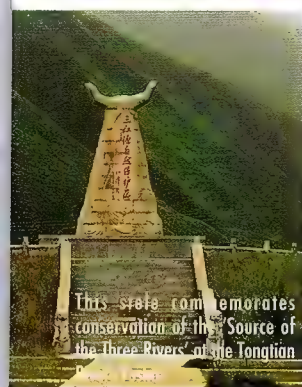
Spreading over 4,500 sq km, Qinghai Lake is the largest lake in Qinghai Province and the largest inland saltwater lake in China. Its habitat includes more than 160 species of birds, 36 mammal species and a wide variety of aquatic creatures, as well as 455 seed plants and 53 aquatic plants. Every spring, tiny Bird Island (0.8 sq km) welcomes more than 100,000 birds of all kinds. Migratory

Xinjiang 新疆



The source of the Yellow River.





birds from South China can be seen here, along with species from Southeast Asia, India and Nepal.

Qarhan Salt Lake

In the middle of Qaidam Basin, Qarhan Salt Lake is the largest inland salt lake in the world. Spanning 20 to 60 km from south to north and 180 km from east to west, it covers a total area of 5,800 sq km. The lake's salt reserves are enough to supply the world for another 2,000 years, or just the Chinese population for the next 8,000 years!

Hol Xil

The high-altitude Hol Xil region has occasional glaciers

scattered over the snowline. Those on the snow-clad peaks at the Qinghai-Xinjiang border are the main feeders of the region's rivers and lakes. More than 50 rivers of varying size radiate out from the water system, with the lake basin at the centre. The main rivers include the Zengsongqu, Kusaihe, Paoma, Xianchehe, Tianshuihe, Huandonghe and Liushahe. Seasonal rivers with small runoff volume, they all run into lakes.

The Hol Xil region has one of the highest densities of highland lakes in the world. More than 70 lakes cover areas ranging from 1 sq km to 1,000 sq km, including 25 freshwater, 46 saltwater and two salt lakes. Hol Xil is only slightly behind Finland, the nation of 1,000 lakes, with lakes covering 7.65 percent of land area compared with the latter's 8 percent coverage.



The glaciers of Anyemaqen Mountain feed the Yellow River.

Protecting San Jiang Yuan

Photos • Zheng Yunfeng Article • Xu Gang

Nearly one billion Chinese rely on the waters that flow from San Jiang Yuan. This area of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, from which the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers originate, deserves the nation's respect and protection.

For the past 20 years, however, San Jiang Yuan's grasslands have been deteriorating gradually. The age-old glaciers are shrinking. Excessive grazing and poaching, and the repeatedly banned but still ongoing panning for gold, along with global warming, are taking their toll on the region. Under these circumstances, San Jiang Yuan conjures up mixed feelings of awe at its rugged beauty and sorrow at the damage it suffers daily...





Each time I set off for Qinghai I am never sure what to expect, especially as I make my way to San Jiang Yuan.

If you know nothing else about San Jiang Yuan, you should at least know that the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers all spring from here. At the same time, poverty-stricken Qinghai Province, the renowned 'Roof of the World', is also a synonym for 'poor', 'backward' and 'remote'. Take San Jiang Yuan for example. Of 16 counties in the region, seven are 'Key Counties in the National Poverty Relief Programme'. However, in terms of spiritual belief and traditional culture, Qinghai is rich, the very core of cultural wealth. It is also not as far away as we might think, with its capital city, Xining, near Lanzhou, the geographical centre of China.

In a sense, Qinghai is China's beating heart, pumping the blood that runs through and shapes both the nation's natural landscape and its worldly existence, and thereby affecting the lives of millions of people every day.

In Grateful Appreciation

The Qinghai highland is known as the 'Patriarch of Mountains' and the 'Source of All Waters'. Qinghai claims a number of towering mountain ranges that run more than 1,000 km in length, including the Altun, Qilian, Kunlun, Hol Xil, Bayan Har, Anemaqen and Tanggula, which form the backbone of the highland area. Starting from these highland ranges, the three-tiered terrain of China descends from east to west towards the Pacific, the world's largest ocean. The rivers that flow from San Jiang Yuan carry not only water, but also culture. In the descendants of this ancient civilization, water and culture mix.

From generation to generation, the Chinese have collected and passed on the myths, legends and bitter true stories about rivers and their source seekers. This enduring national memory is a mark of pride in China's long history. Like the source of a river and the root of a tree, we are the offspring of the land. In this spirit, we felt obliged to seek out the headwaters of

1. The water quality of Ngoring Lake at the upper reaches of the Yellow River has deteriorated in the last 20 years, and the fish population has dropped.

2. The previously green grasslands at the source of the Lancang River have turned to wasteland.



these mighty rivers and the region from which they spring on repeated expeditions, to discover the very sources of life and culture.

For those of you who once knew something about this region, perhaps learned in school but long since forgotten, it is time to renew your acquaintance. For

the mountains and the melting snows that feed our nation's greatest rivers feed you as well and it is only right to acknowledge this gift: 'When I see mountains, I give them my respect. When I see upright actions, I follow them. Though I may not reach the level of either, I will try with all my heart to do so.'



2



Civilized History

San Jiang Yuan was never an uncivilized region.

In primeval times, the part of San Jiang Yuan that is currently considered too inhospitable for human life was densely forested and blanketed in flowers. Cultural relics ranging from the Palaeolithic to the Neolithic age excavated along the Tuotuohe River, the headwaters of the Yangtze, and the painted pottery and Dance Basin from the Majiayao Culture Period are evidence that the San Jiang Yuan region and its surrounding areas — to some extent, the entire Qinghai-Tibet Plateau — are cradles of ancient Chinese culture. The Majiayao culture was celebrated for its refined painted pottery, skilfully shaped by hand from red clay or mixed sand and fired at a controlled 1,000°C. As many as 13,000 shards of pottery have been unearthed at the Liuwan Grave in Ledu County, half of them painted. Some 3,500 ~ 4,500 years old, the graceful shapes decorated with delicate patterns reflect the region's status as the cultural pinnacle of the age. In tracing a culture back to its source, the design of its wares portrays the artistic level of the time. Therefore, we know that this facet of the lives of our prehistoric Chinese ancestors was highly developed. Indeed, until the very first primitive Chinese characters emerged, it was pottery design that furthered cultural propagation and education.

Deteriorating Ecosystem

However, the beauty of this region is fading fast. Actual physical damage is one cause, but forgetting and giving up on a heritage are just as harmful. The

retreat of the snow line, the pollution of rivers and lakes, and the desertification of the San Jiang Yuan region have served to warn us — over and over again. Are we heeding that warning?

The glaciers in the heart of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau have shrunk back to a higher altitude due to global warming. The Geladandong Glacier at the source of the Yangtze River has retreated 700 metres in the 13 years from 1991 ~ 2004. The volume of melted snow water from the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau glaciers accounts for 82 percent of the country's total glacier runoff. Glaciers require low temperatures and plentiful rainfall to remain stable. Gravity, climate change and other external forces are causing the huge glaciers to flow at unprecedented rates. Rivers are formed from the melting drops; glaciers are the 'Water Towers of China', but their stores are draining too quickly now.

The San Jiang Yuan ecosystem is extremely fragile and sensitive. When it was still a relatively closed environment upon which humans had little impact, a subtle balance was maintained among the mountains, the wilderness, the grassland and the people. The marshes were once luxuriant and vast. Highland pasture covered the ground. As late as the 1970s, the grass was still green and lush enough to sustain the cattle and sheep that grazed there. The snow on the mountain slopes was pure white. The streams gurgled non-stop.

The snow line started retreating in the 1980s. Creeping desertification turned the grassland brown. By the 1990s, the exposed land was rough and

1. The glaciers at the source of the Yangtze River are disappearing inch by inch. How will the people at the lower reaches survive when this resource disappears?

2. The desert is gobbling up the grasslands as it approaches Qinghai Lake.



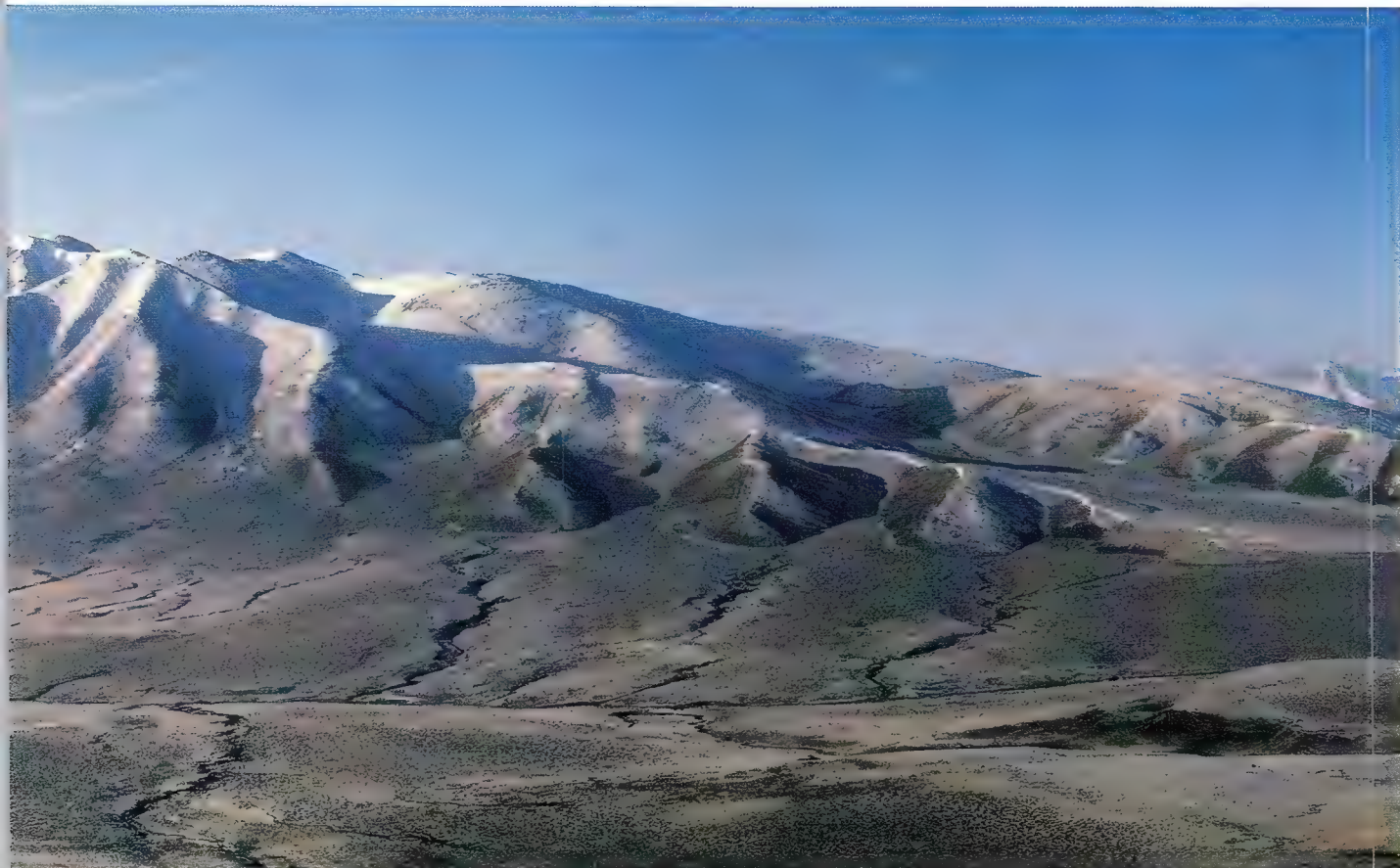


rocky. The glaciers backed off, and the streams dried up. If this situation continues, neither the people nor the livestock of the San Jiang Yuan region will be able to survive there. Unfortunately, the soil and water loss is worsening.

Some 750,000 sq km of the source area for the Yellow River has experienced soil and water loss, while 106,000 sq km of the Yangtze area is similarly devastated. Together, these affected areas equal three Ningxia Hui Autonomous Regions.

The volume of mud and sand from Qinghai lost each year into the Yellow River alone is 88.14 million tons. Another 12.32 million tons pours into the Yangtze, while the Lancang River absorbs about 5 million tons. Add these three figures together and you have the equivalent of 30,000 10-ton-capacity lorries dumping soil into the rivers each day. Some years the Yellow River has completely dried up at the source.

The marshes in the San Jiang Yuan region have also been drained due to water loss and water shortage, leaving nothing but mud, sand and exposed rock behind. They will eventually become desert. At the lake on the north side of Geladandong Ice Peak, five-to-eight-metre high mounds of sediment rise above the surface of the water in places. A vital link to the source of the Yangtze is about to vanish



during our lifetime. If the blood vessels run dry, how can the heart keep beating? The volume of water in Quemo Co Lake has been reduced by half. The water surface of Ngoring Lake has shrunk by 60 metres, retreating at a steady rate of 2.3 cm each year. At the Qumalai county seat in the source area of the Yellow River, 112 of 117 wells have dried up. The Hajang Salt Lake 10 km from Ngoring Lake covered 8.5 sq km in 1990 and was 40 cm deep. In 2000, the lake dried up completely. Lungrig Co Lake in Xinxu Lake had a surface area of 15.3 sq km in 1990. Of the four sister lakes in Xinxu Lake, two have disappeared.

Just Another Salt Lake?

Qinghai Lake, the largest lake in Qinghai Province, is also suffering.

Every July, the lakeside of this vast, magnificently blue body of water is draped with a massive robe of golden rape flowers. However, this stunning scene cannot cover up the eco-crisis on the Qinghai grassland. We reclaim more and more grassland to ensure a higher yield of crops, but an increase in crops necessitates an increase in water consumption. A large volume of water is now channelled from its original course into the fields or reservoirs to meet this need. The water that does eventually flow into the lake

is minimal. After a few rounds of farming, the reclaimed grassland succumbs to desertification.

We would do well to remember nature's vivid colours, as we may wake up one morning to find them gone.

Qinghai Lake's water intake dwindles year by year, causing the lake surface to shrink. This in turn has caused the salinity of the lake water to increase; it rose from 12.49 g per litre in 1962 to 14.152 g per litre in 1986. A lake with one gram of salt content per litre is called a freshwater lake, while one with 1 to 35 g per litre is called a brackish lake. A lake with 35 to 50 g of salt content per litre is called a saline lake, whereas one with more than 50 g is called a salt lake.

Naked Carp: Fish Out of Water?

In spring the naked carp (*Gymnocypris przewalskii*) migrate back to their birthplace to spawn. Naked carp can endure a high salt content in water. As the salt content in Qinghai Lake is high, the fish have no longer have scales to help them excrete salt. When a choice has to be made between life and environment to achieve some balance, it is life that always changes. The transformation of the naked carp to a scale-less species is interesting, yet bitter and cruel, as man could have helped to avoid it.

1. A watershed for the Yellow and Yangtze rivers, the Bayan Har range has played a role in the development of the different cultures of both north and south China.

2. Gold prospectors have turned the grasslands inside out; at one time more than 100,000 of them were digging up the land in search of gold.



Many fish never leave their birthplace, but a number of different fish species migrate between their place of birth and their daily habitat. Naked carps are one such 'roaming' fish. They spawn in the freshwater river but live in the saline lake. The Buha River, which is the largest river feeding Qinghai Lake, is also the river that naked carp revisit to spawn. In the spawning season, orderly schools of naked carp swim upstream from the lake to the river.

However, the dam at the reservoir in the upper reaches of the Buha River blocks their migratory route and the Shaliuhe River in Gangca County has dried up. In pursuing their natural urge to procreate, thousands upon thousands of naked carp end up stacking themselves up on the dried riverbed, where they die before they can reproduce. Excessive fishing is also severely reducing the number of naked carp in Qinghai Lake. What is Qinghai Lake without naked carp?

Well-known Bird Island in Qinghai Lake consists of two small islets. The larger one in the east is Haixipi Island. Its rocky peaks attract cormorants. Dandao

(Egg Island), to the west, is home to the bar-headed goose, brown-headed goose and great black-headed gull. The great black-headed gulls build nests and lay numerous eggs on the beach, hence the island's name. Though small, Bird Island is an orderly, diverse habitat. Qinghai Lake provides food — the tasty naked carp — to all birds on Bird Island.

Even so, there were far more birds here 20 years ago. The current residents are wary of humans. At the slightest approach, the watchful birds disperse noisily.

San Jiang Yuan is one of the few endangered wildlife habitats in China, but poaching does take place in the region. Camels cannot find freshwater and drink saltwater instead. To escape man, the animals retreat to colder, higher places above the snow line.

According to one source, some 40,000 Tibetan antelopes have disappeared from the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau in the past decade. Where was our warning and why didn't we heed it? When the wildlife around us begins to disappear, is that not a warning that man will be next to vanish?

1. Qinghai Lake has prevented the desert from encroaching eastward, but in recent years, she has also had to grapple with desertification, contamination, a decreased fish population and other problems.

2-4. Beautiful flowers such as these are now a rarity on the grasslands.

5. Fishermen on Ngoring Lake.

6. Qinghai used to be a paradise for wild animals.

7. Bird Island: is this bird lamenting environmental destruction?

8. Nestlings face a raft of environmental hazards in their struggle to feed and thrive.

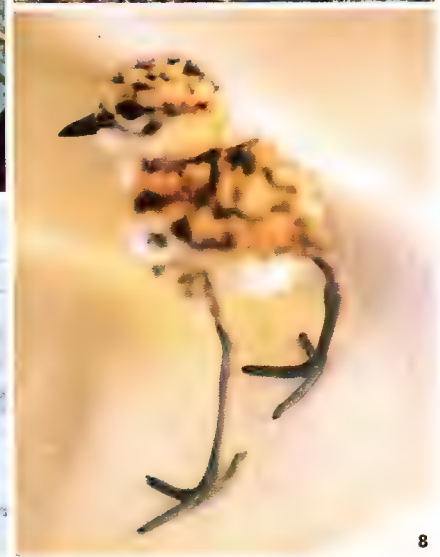
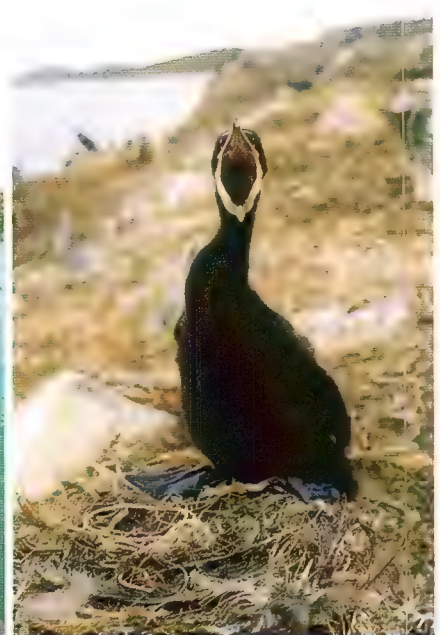
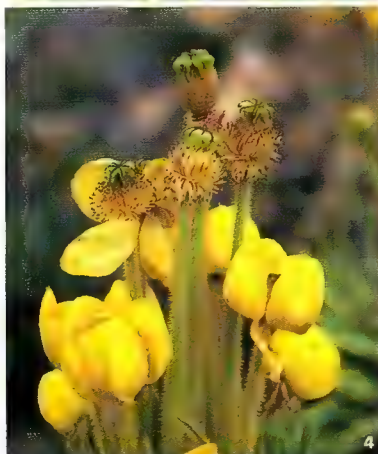
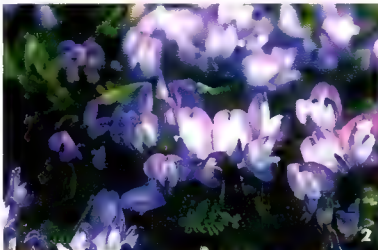
With its icy peaks and snow-capped mountains, wide distribution of rivers and lakes, and diverse landforms ranging from grassland to wilderness, Hol Xil at the source area of the Yangtze River is a natural paradise for wild animals. The Mongolian gazelle, Tibetan antelope, wild donkey and wild yak are the four main species here. Other rare wildlife includes the snow leopard, argali (a large, horned mountain sheep), blue sheep and black-necked crane.

Tibetan Antelope

Tibetan antelope, or chiru, often gather by the lakeside where they seem to stare at the water as if pondering some great problem. The content of haemoglobin in the blood of the Tibetan antelope is high; this and other physical advantages make the animals well-suited to the harsh climate. Many

mammals, including man, have difficulty making their way across snow-covered mountains more than 6,000 metres above sea level. At such altitudes, the Tibetan antelope can run at speeds of up to 60 km/h for an hour and even reach 120 km/h when necessary. Many carnivores that rely on speed to catch their prey are easily outrun by the Tibetan antelope. With their natural speed and ability to endure wintry conditions, these sensitive, strong creatures continue to persevere in Hol Xil. Unfortunately, the odds of survival are increasingly against them.

The ongoing slaughter of the Tibetan antelope can be traced back to the 18th century, but the worst damage was done in the late 1970s and early 1980s. At that time gold prospectors thronged to Hol Xil in the thousands. By 1999 they



numbered 100,000. They ravaged Hol Xil, the largest gold preserve area in China. With so many people and not enough food to go around, Tibetan antelope were hunted for their meat. Uniquely suited to the oxygen-deficient highland, the antelope evolved hair and skin that effectively block out the cold. When the people realized this, the animals were hunted for their skins as well. One Tibetan antelope can produce 100 g of fine hair, which has come to be treasured as another kind of 'gold'. On average, a shatoosh shawl made from the fine hair of a Tibetan antelope measures from 1 to 3 metres in length, 1 to 1.5 metres in width and weighs 100 g. It is so soft and light that it can be pulled through a ring smoothly. For this reason it is also called a 'ring shawl.' About 400 g of fine hair is needed to create one shatoosh shawl, which translates into the slaughter of four Tibetan antelopes. Shawls can fetch USD10,000 to 40,000 in upmarket boutiques. Kashmir is the world's largest Tibetan antelope wool processing centre. In 1992 the total processing volume of Tibetan antelope wool was 2,000 kg, which equates to coarse wool from 13,000 dead antelopes. In the 21st century, the demand for shatoosh has skyrocketed. At least 20,000 Tibetan antelopes are poached each year to satisfy the desires of a wealthy few.

Yaks Versus Mice

San Jiang Yuan is the home of the wild yak.
China has more yaks than any other country,

Qinghai has the most in all of China, and San Jiang Yuan is where most of those live. This extraordinary animal has two horns pointing defiantly at the sky, a pair of bright, alert eyes, and a muscular hump that suggests staying power. The hairy beast is at home in the mountains, equally at ease at 3,000 or 6,000 metres above sea level. It climbs without effort and thinks nothing of bedding down on snow, arrogantly stalking the forbidden zone so unfriendly to man and many other animals. When it halts on occasion for a good look around, it does so with the air of a monarch surveying his or her kingdom. A full-grown wild yak weighs well over 1,000 kg. For all that girth, it is not a clumsy animal. Its strong body endures cold, hunger and thirst as it rambles through the wilderness, powerfully confident and wilfully composed. Wild yak herds live on the high, cold marshy areas. The marshes are full of sinkholes, but the heavily built yak walks over them with ease.

A mild animal by nature, the yak was domesticated by the ancient people of San Jiang Yuan to take on burdens too great for man. To a certain extent, the culture of San Jiang Yuan is the culture of yaks. The region's snow-covered mountains and rivers and the sacred yak enrich the mythology and continue to appeal to people of all generations. The land is embedded with their presence, living and dead, as sun-bleached yak skulls appear among the grasses, fresh flowers and clear creeks.

The wild yak survives on surprisingly little. High in

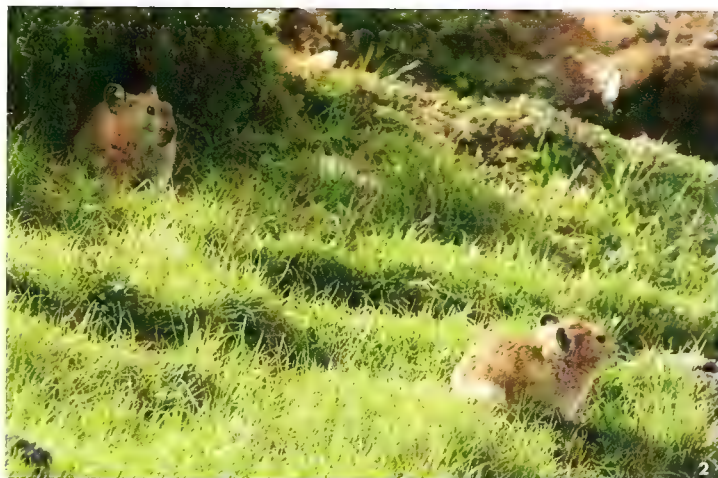


1. Xianjia, a herdsman from Anyemagen Mountain, points out the mouse holes scattered all over the grassland. Twenty years ago, this was a marsh but now it is completely dry.

2. The larger pika mice are as big as rabbits. They dig holes to reach the grass roots, which they eat. As such they are very destructive to the grasslands.

3. Yaks, often called 'Boats on the Plateau', are the symbol of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau.

4. Perches have been erected to attract hawks, the natural enemy of mice, in an effort to control the rodent population.



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3



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the mountains, through months of endless winter, they eat snow, dried grass and moss, chewing slowly as if savouring this meagre food.

At Yak Beach and Yak Valley armies of wild yaks once roamed freely. Now it is rare to see even one yak. Gone, too, are the wolf packs. The field mouse and the plateau pika have taken their places. Grass is getting sparse as bunker-like mouse holes dot the land.

If the sacred yak returns to San Jiang Yuan, the rodents will have to reign in their impudence.

Desertification

The near-extinction of wild animals, excessive grazing, mouse explosion and uncontrolled mass digging for gold are the main reasons for the rapid desertification of the grassland.

According to an authoritative source, 3,598.058 sq km of grassland is turning into desert in the source area of the Yellow River, 1,427.031 sq km of that being seriously damaged. In the Yangtze River source area those figures are 2,089.334 sq km and 1,820.171 sq km, respectively. In the entire San Jiang Yuan region 25.28 million sq km has suffered desertification, chiefly at the Tongtianhe River terrace

and the Chumar River beach area in Qumaleb and Madoi counties, the worst case areas. In Qumaleb County alone, 333.3 sq km of grassland has completely turned to desert. The gold prospectors do not hesitate to damage the earth in their quest for instant riches, but they take their wealth at the expense of the life all around them.

Madoi's Hard Lesson

The county seat of Madoi, known as the 'No. 1 County' along the Yellow River over a decade ago, has been relocated three times because of water shortage, desertification and rodent damage. Where will it move next? The evident contrast between the beautiful name of Madoi, meaning 'Source of Big Rivers' in Tibetan, and the town's actual deteriorating environment begs the question: Do we take responsibility or blame the gods?

Located on the northern slopes of the Bayan Har Mountains in the Yellow River valley west of the Anemaqen Mountains, Madoi is blessed with twinkling lakes, including the well-known twin Gyaring and Ngoring lakes. Twenty years ago, the county's economy relied on animal husbandry carried





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out on the grassland. From 1980 to 1982, the number of livestock per capita exceeded 100 head, and the per capita annual net income of the county topped the country for three consecutive years. At that time, Madoi was the pearl of Qinghai.

However, bountiful harvests, sudden wealth and economic prosperity went to people's heads. Driven by the slogan 'Reach One Million Head of Livestock', herders overran the Madoi grassland to an unbearable degree. At the time, the government gave free cattle, sheep and grassland to anyone willing to herd. Gold prospectors and herders from other regions flocked to the county. Madoi's population exploded to more than 100,000 in the county seat alone. Each year a 10,000-strong army of 'cordycepin diggers' took over what remained of the grassland, devastating it in search of the precious herb. In a mere two decades the lush paradise of Madoi gave way to ravaging sandstorms, rampant desertification and bone-dry riverbeds. Once dubbed 'Thousand-Lake County', Madoi no longer deserves that title. According to satellite telemetric data collected in 2000, there

were only 261 lakes with surface areas larger than 0.06 sq km in the county. Of the county seat's 16 wells, only six still contain water. The people of Heihe Township now have to travel a few kilometres to break the river ice into blocks that they carry back home to be melted into drinking water. Global warming, reduced rainfall and human-inflicted damage have pushed the highland grassland ecosystem of the San Jiang Yuan region to the brink of collapse.

The ecological changes wrought clearly tell us that the craze for money will only result in deserts where lush grassland used to be and the destruction of the homeland of so many plant and animal species, not to mention man.

In recent news, the Chinese government has launched a mass eco-migration of people out of the San Jiang Yuan region. With the government's help, over 400,000 nomads are to be relocated, on the basis of free will, to permanent residence in towns. In five years the core area of the San Jiang Yuan region is to become an unpopulated zone.

This is undoubtedly good news for San Jiang Yuan.

Translated by Zhang Boli

1. Only when there is a water source to support grassland can herds survive.

2. The source of the Yangtze near the Geladanadong Peaks.



20 Years of Ecological Damage

Photos & Article • Zheng Yunfeng

In the long span of the earth's history, 20 years is a mere moment; but when nature is continually harmed over two decades, it needs a far longer time to recover. In some cases, it never recovers.

Over the past 20 years, the ecology of San Jiang Yuan has suffered countless disasters.

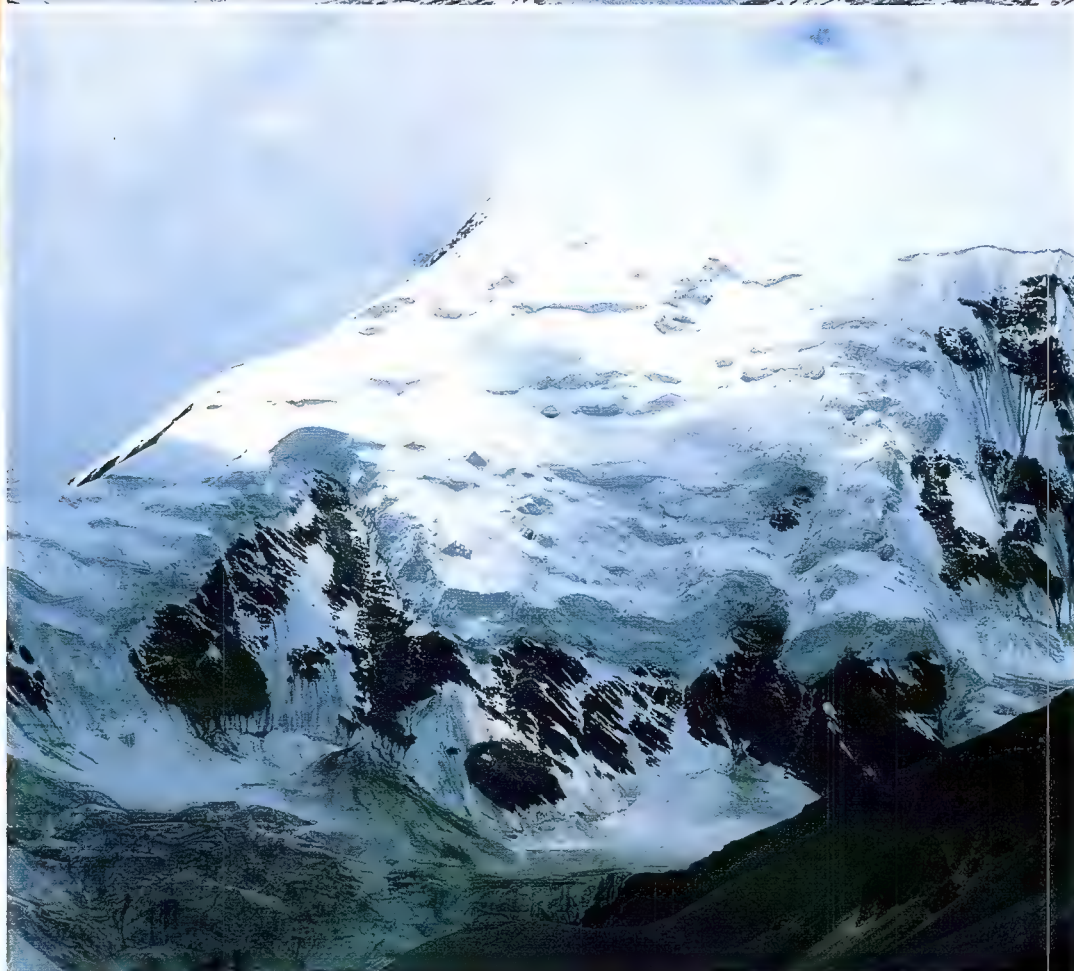
During a trip I took 20 years ago to report on the river sources at the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, I met a Tibetan man who had been away from home for many years. When I asked what he missed most about his hometown, he answered without hesitation: 'The snow-capped mountains, the grassland, the herds of yak and sheep, and my family.' I was puzzled: Could a snow-capped mountain be more

important to a man than his family? He laughed and asked me: 'If there is no snow mountain, how can there be grassland? If there is no grassland, how can there be yaks and sheep? How can I support a family if there are no yaks or sheep?'

I recently returned to the rivers' sources to find the snow on the mountains melting, glaciers vanishing, lakes shrinking, wetlands cracked and dry from lack of



1. At San Jiang Yuan, the marshes have dried up and the grassland has turned to desert.



The Anyemagen glaciers 20 years ago (top right). Anyemagen Mountain (alt. 6,600 metres) is one of four mountains sacred to Tibetans. The primordial glaciers covered 96 percent of the area and fed the Yellow River. (early September 1985)

The same glaciers 20 years later (below right). The glaciers are melting at a significant rate. (August 25, 2005)



Abundant fish 20 years ago (top left)

Ngoring and Gyaring lakes once yielded plentiful fish stocks. (Ngoring Lake, August 1985)

Far fewer fish 20 years later (below left)

The Huangyu fish populations in the Ngoring and Gyaring lakes have dwindled alarmingly due to over-fishing and pollution. (Ngoring Lake, July 2004)



water, deserts engulfing grasslands, grazing lands deteriorating and rodents overrunning the place. Now I fully understood the Tibetan man's words. The terrible changes in the area shocked and saddened me. My heart was broken, my throat closed up, and I wanted to cry. But no tears came....

Many friends ask why I have made photographing the Yangtze and Yellow rivers my life's work. My answer is that as a descendant of the emperors Yan and Huang, I believe that no other natural force has influenced Chinese civilization and

the characteristics of the Chinese nation as greatly as these two great rivers.

My quest to see the place where the rivers originate began with an arduous journey early in the summer of 1985. I finally did reach the source area of the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers after crossing snow-covered mountains, grasslands, marshes and glaciers. Along the way my vehicle overturned, I was attacked by vicious dogs, and I suffered bouts of altitude sickness.

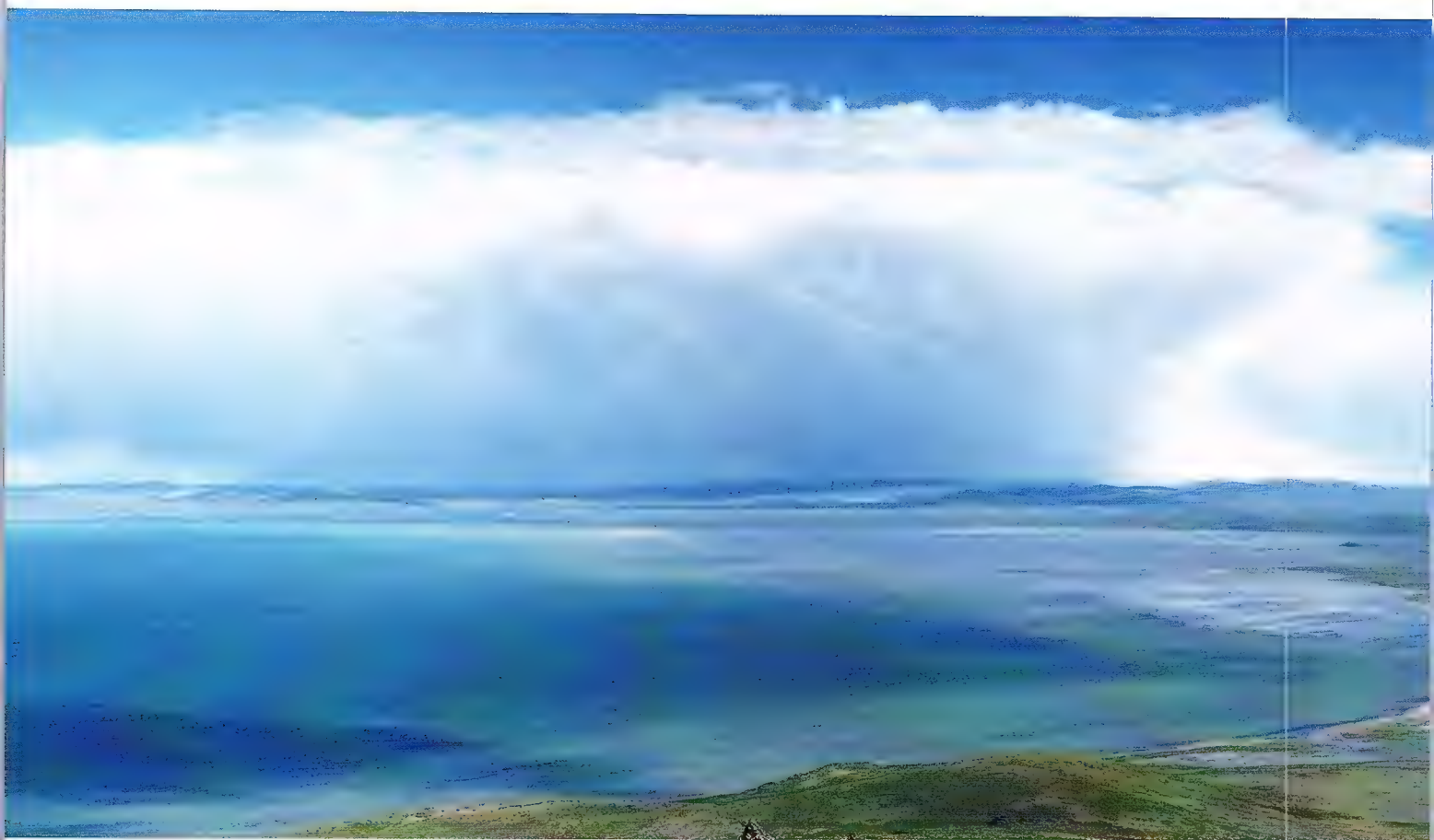
In the past 20 years, I have visited the source of

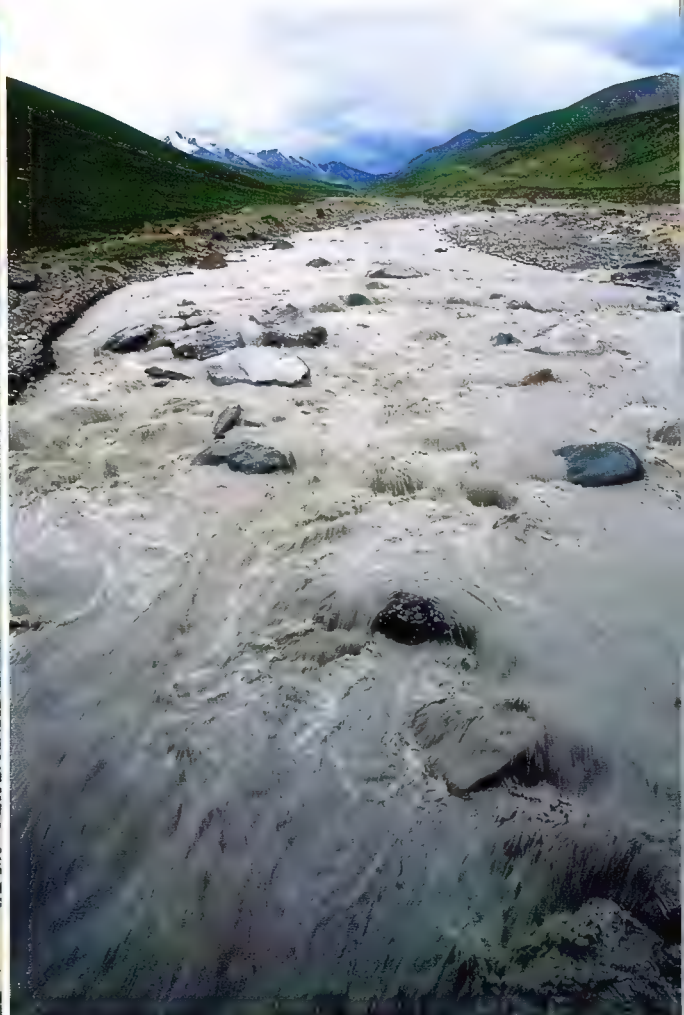
Ngoring Lake 20 years ago (top right)

The Ngoring (Long Blue Lake) used to be pristine. (August 1988)

Ngoring Lake 20 years later (below right)

The smaller lakes that once lay between Ngoring and Gyaring lakes have dried up due to decreased rainfall. Consequently, rodents have overrun and destroyed the grassland. After a rain, eroded soil flows into the Ngoring, polluting the water. (August 2005)





the Yellow River eight times and those of the Yangtze and Lancang three times. During these visits, I took more than 80,000 photos covering a wide range of themes, including history, geography, landscapes and religious cultures. In body and heart, I touched and felt the three rivers, which represent the soul of the Chinese.

In the river source area, the sky, the earth, the people and all kinds of wildlife managed to co-exist for generations. However, since the 1980s, profit-hungry intruders have descended on the area, digging up the land to look for gold, cutting down trees, and slaughtering wild animals en masse. Their crazed greed has upset the ecological balance in San Jiang Yuan.

Global warming, melting glaciers, decreased rainfall, dried up marshland and the rodent crises compound the problem. According to a World Nature Fund report, by 2050, half of the world's glaciers will be gone. Scientists hold that with global warming, the glaciers on the Himalayas will vanish within 50 years. As a result, 40 percent of the population of South Asia and China will be short of drinking water. Li Fengxia, director of the Qinghai Meteorological Research Centre, told us that in the 25 years from 1975 to 2000, the banks of Qinghai Lake

had advanced towards the water, shrinking the lake surface significantly.

When I was in the river source area 20 years ago, I watched Tibetans fetch water from streams not far from their tents. The water, melted from ice and snow, was crystal clear. Today, they have to go a long way to get drinking water. Due to large quantities of sand and silt in the water, even those living on its banks no longer drink the water from the Tuotuo River. Before, the herdsmen could set up their tents anywhere, but now they have to flatten the land and fill the rodent holes first.

When I returned, after two decades, I tried to reach the shooting sites I had used before, but the places had changed beyond recognition. Without my guide, Xianjia, I would not have found any of them.

As a press photographer, I know the weight of my camera as well as that of my responsibility. I have no choice but to continue my efforts to accurately record the vicissitudes at the river source area, to inform more people about its miseries. In this way, I believe, I can help the public recognize the importance of protecting it.

The camera in my hands has become even heavier.

Baita Ravine at Maqen Gangri 20 years ago (left)

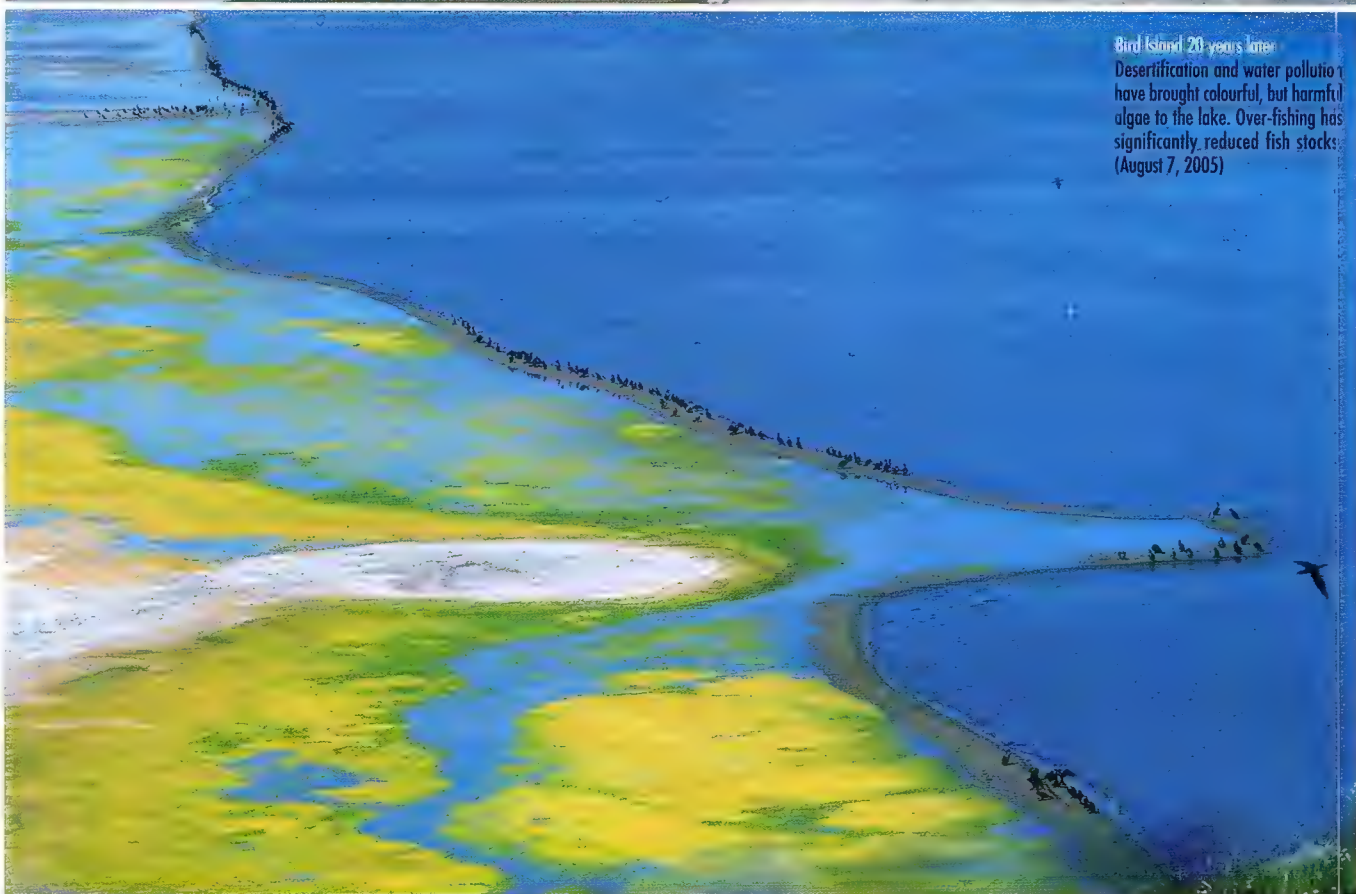
The glacier on Maqen Gangri Mountain is the largest and longest in the Yellow River's drainage area. Clear, melted glacier water created numerous streams that fed the river. (early September 1985)

Baita Ravine 20 years later (right)
Due to excessive glacial melt, soil and sand now mix with the water, muddying the Baita River. (August 19, 2005)



Bird Island 20 years ago

Qinghai Lake acted as a natural barrier against creeping desertification, protecting the northeast section of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. The lake water was extremely clean. (July 1986)



Bird Island 20 years later

Desertification and water pollution have brought colourful, but harmful algae to the lake. Over-fishing has significantly reduced fish stocks. (August 7, 2005)

At the Source of the Yellow River

Photos & Article • Ma Yiu Chun

The waters of the Yellow River flow from high mountains, but they actually trickle from several small springs before they form a proper stream. After many twists and turns, absorbing numerous creeks along the way, the little stream becomes a large, torrential river. It was this river that nourished the brilliant Chinese culture.

It's natural to think about the source of the water we drink. For the Chinese, a visit to the source of the Yellow River is a chance to pay homage to the great waterway.





The source of the Yellow River; commemorative monuments can be seen on the left.



For 20 years I have longed to see the source of the Yellow River. I had tried before, wading through and walking along several sections of the river, but I never reached the source area due to its remote location, bad weather, high altitudes and inconvenient transport. Under such circumstances, it's a difficult journey requiring ample time, reliable equipment, sound health and the determination to endure all kinds of hardships.

A Dream Realized

Twenty years later, I embarked on my dream. Luckily Zheng Yunfeng, who had already made seven trips to the source of the Yellow River, was planning

another trip on this route. So I decided to go with him. Zheng had bought a four-wheel drive Jeep Cherokee a few years earlier to aid his photographic journeys, so we drove it from Beijing to Qinghai.

Early November was terribly cold. We left via the Great Wall north of the city, passing Zhangjiakou in Hebei and Jining in Inner Mongolia and advancing westward along the Yellow River valley. When I saw the yellowish river, I felt excited, as I knew I would see its clear original water within a week. We took the highway to Baotou, a city at the foot of the Yinshan Mountains that is the country's iron and steel centre. On the other side of the mountain range is the vast grassland where the nomadic ethnic Mongolians live.



We stayed the night in Baotou before continuing on the next morning. In this supposedly wild border area, there are first-rate highways, so we could drive 1,000 km in a day, faster than a train. Following the bend of the river, we turned south in the afternoon and entered the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, the famed 'land south of the Yangtze on the northern border'. When people say, 'The Yellow River causes 100 disasters but makes the bend area rich,' they are referring to Ningxia.

After driving west from Lanzhou for about an hour, we entered Qinghai Province, where the sources of the three great rivers are located. The names of the places we passed, including the county seats of Minhe (People's Harmony), Ledu (Happy Capital) and Ping'an (Peaceful and Safe), and the provincial capital, Xining (Peace in the West), all express earnest wishes for tranquillity, contentment and safety. The east part of the province, including Hualong, Jianzha and Tongren in the southern area, has historically been more populated and better culturally developed

since ancient times thanks to the nourishment of the Yellow River. The Liuwan potteries of Ledu and the Regong Art of Tongren represent the cream of the culture of this area.

We arrived in Xining, capital of Qinghai Province, at noon. Over the previous two and a half days, we had driven 1,800 km. Xining, with its towering skyscrapers, large public squares and busy intersections, is far more prosperous than it was 20 years ago. Supermarkets now carry goods from both north and south China. I barely recognized the place. Unfortunately, the air quality was not good; the sky was grey.

Cold but Happy

The following morning, we headed for the first county seat in the river source area, Madoi. Everybody was happy and excited. On this, his eighth visit to the area, Zheng was like a son returning home to see his mother after a long absence. He was also excited, but in a different way. Seeing the terrible



1. Wenquan (Hot Spring) Town on an early winter morning.

2. Caution is paramount on icy, snowy roads. Kuhai (Bitter Lake) can be seen in the distance.

3. We bathed and brushed our teeth with hot spring water in the freezing cold.

4. Thick slabs of ice at Ngoring Lake in the upper reaches of the Yellow River.



destruction of the local ecology over the years has broken his heart. It's as if his homestead has been destroyed.

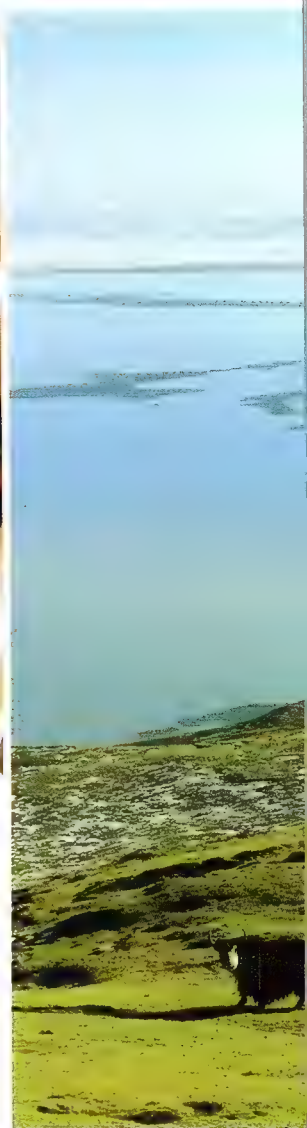
According to the weather forecast, a cold front was coming, and temperatures in greater Qinghai would drop 8 ~ 9°C. Zheng was pleased by the news, as it would be easier to drive when the rivers froze over. He did not fear the cold at all. So, we marched west against the chill winds, and in an hour we arrived at Riyue (Sun & Moon) Mountain, which divides the agricultural areas from the nomad areas of Qinghai. The plateau was further west from here. There are pavilions either side of Sun & Moon Mountain, in between which stands the statue of Tang-dynasty Princess Wencheng, who married Tibetan king Songtsan Zangbo. With her precious mirror in hand, she looks towards the Tang capital of Chang'an in the east. It was a fine day, with white clouds floating in the blue sky. But the temperature was -10°C, and I could not stop shivering. Since my hands could not hold the camera steadily, I took refuge in the pavilion. This first wave of bitter cold told me that the journey ahead would be tough, though we had prepared carefully.

Qinghai Lake and Qaidam Basin lie west of Sun & Moon Mountain. From Golmud, you can take the Qinghai-Tibet Highway and drive south towards the Geladan Glaciers, which are the source of the Yangtze River. The origins of the Yellow River and the Lancang are both on the Bayan Har Mountains, on the south and north sides, respectively. They can be reached by driving south from Sun & Moon Mountain

via Gonghe, Madoi and Yushu. But our planned route was to the source of the Yellow River. We had lunch in the county town of Gonghe. From there, the sandy road, which gives vehicles problems, extended for more than 100 km. We were not surprised to see many garages along the road. After finishing this tough section, we arrived in the town of Heka at 4 pm and headed over the Heka Pass, 3,900 metres above sea level. The next pass, Ngola, was 1,000 metres higher in altitude. It was getting dark when we reached Ngola Pass. Dusk turned the vast, snow-covered land an extraordinarily beautiful hue of blue. However, our driver, Tian, could not enjoy the scenery because he had to concentrate on the icy road to avoid sliding off. We sensed the seriousness of the situation. When we cleared the dangerous section, I decided that the sandy road had not been so bad after all.

We visited the Hot Spring Inn, where Princess Wencheng was said to have bathed, at the foot of the mountain. There is nothing more luxurious than a hot spring bath in such cold conditions. But the facilities were rather primitive, and we had to fetch the hot spring water from a well in the darkness. The ethnic Hui man who ran our guesthouse kindly warned us not to eat too much at such a high altitude (3,800 metres above sea level), even though hearty appetites would have been better for his business.

We continued our journey south the next day and entered the Anyemaqen Mountains. The summit, the 6,282-metre high Maqen Gangri, is situated south of the hot springs. After climbing over the mountain and





passing Kuhai (Bitter Sea) Lake and Zuima (Drunken Horse) Beach, we reached Huashi (Flowery Stone) Gorge at noon. From here travellers can head east round the Maqen Gangri to Maqen, the capital city of Golog Prefecture, or head further south, some 80 km, to Madoi.

Same Old Madoi

I had travelled to Madoi once before some 20 years ago. In 1983, I went to Lhasa, capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region, with hopes of reaching the Yellow River's source via Madoi. I first flew to Qamdo in eastern Tibet, where the Lancang River runs through the north of the city. Also in Qamdo, the upper stream waters of the Zhaqu and Angqu join to form the Lancang. On the map of Qinghai Province, Madoi and Yushu are not far north of Qamdo. But the terrain is difficult and there was no convenient local transport at that time. As there was no scheduled long-distance bus in service, I had to rely on passing trucks for a lift. After several days of waiting for one, I was finally on

the road, during which time I spent the -20°C nights in the driver's cabin. Furthermore, the drive was interrupted again and again, due to engine failure or massive potholes. It took me 20 days to reach Madoi from Qamdo. Now, on this visit to the county seat, not much had changed. The cinema was still on the north side of town, at the end of the main street, looking much as it had all those years before. Few people were on the street, which was mostly lined with restaurants, groceries and barbershops opened by people from Sichuan Province. There were also several garages and clinics. I was told that Madoi had been listed as one of the richest counties in the country two decades earlier, but it was now one of the poorest because of the over-grazing of the grasslands that has led to severe soil erosion.

Then our driver Tian succumbed to altitude sickness. Throughout the trip he had frequent headaches, which worsened when we reached Madoi, 4,300 metres above sea level. We sent him to the hospital to receive treatment for oxygen

1. Five of us slept in this tiny room at a herdsman's house, but the luxury of having four walls and a stove in the bitter cold made it a 'five-star hotel'.

2. Gyaring Lake viewed from the mountain between the twin lakes.

deficiency. Obviously, we could not let him drive us to the Yellow River's source, which was at an even higher altitude on a much tougher road. Thankfully, Zheng was familiar enough with Madoi to find us two jeeps and the Sangye brothers to serve as drivers. Though there were only three people in our group, including Xiao Guo, Zheng's assistant, we needed to travel with two vehicles in case one should break down; the water source lies in a no-man's land and the weather there is volatile.

Disappointing Truths

After three days of rest in Madoi, we set off for the source of the Yellow River, bringing with us enough provisions for several days and sturdy equipment to endure the cold nights in the wilderness. Just outside Madoi, we took some photos of a sutra-streamer covered hill. Zheng was so deeply moved by this evidence of Tibetan religious faith that his eyes filled with tears. He was so saddened at the sight of the deteriorating environment that he pledged to do something for the mother river. He would again use his camera to record the truth and call on the public to change their ways and start protecting this region. 'It's beautiful and sad.' He repeated these words often.

The Yellow River, China's second longest river, originates from small springs at the foot of Yagradagze Mountain. It absorbs the Yoigilangleb

River and runs through Xingxiu Lake, which is actually a group of lakes, before first entering Gyaring Lake and then Ngoring Lake and continuing east. Our first stop was at the sister lakes of Ngoring and Gyaring.

Zheng and I rode separately in the two jeeps. My driver was the younger brother, Sangye Dangzhou, while Zheng had Sangye Yangcan, whose nickname was Jinliang. The Sangye brothers were very familiar with the roads in the river source area and had often helped Zheng on his visits to Madoi. Not far from the county seat, my vehicle had a tyre puncture. It seemed a bad omen. The other jeep, driven by Jinliang, was far ahead. When they realized, after half an hour, that we were not behind them, they turned back. Now I fully understood that even if Tian had not fallen ill, we should not have been taking only one vehicle on this section of the trip.

After about an hour's drive, we reached the Yellow River Source Hydropower Station, 17 km downstream of Ngoring Lake. By the time we reached the 'highest hydropower station in the world', the main stream of the Yellow River had frozen and the sluggish flow of slowly melting water was not generating any power. The project, which cost 79.45 million yuan (about US\$10 million), stood idle.

I could not help feeling overjoyed when we reached Ngoring Lake. In November 1983, I hitched a ride on an open truck from the county seat of Madoi

1. A ridge covered with Buddhist flags just outside Madoi. (by Zheng Yunfeng)

2. A truck stuck on the icy Yokutsunglieh River at dusk. It is dangerous to be stranded in the freezing cold night, so everyone works to push the vehicle free.

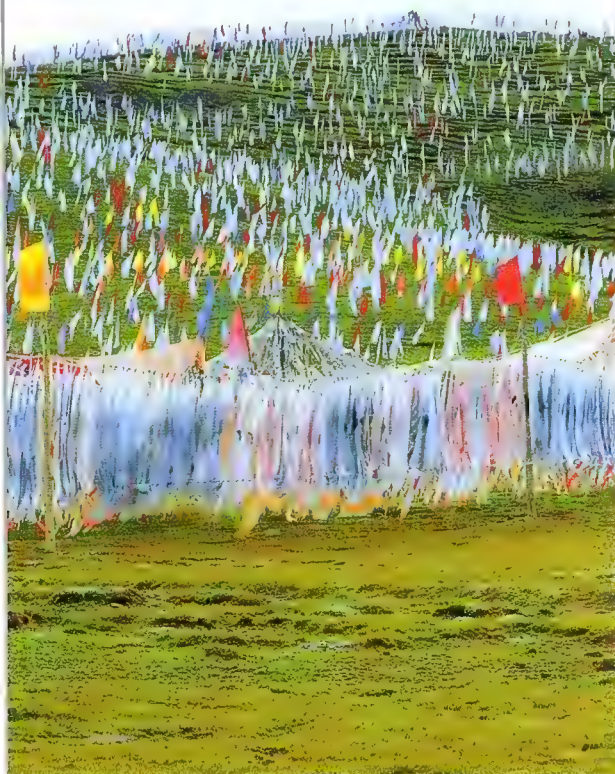
3. Our driver worshipped at the place from where King Gesar, a Tibetan hero, commanded his troops.



and stood in the back, bracing myself against the chill wind all the way to the lake. As soon as we arrived, I rushed into a nearby house, telling the host that I was frozen and couldn't feel my hands after holding myself steady on the truck for more than an hour. An elderly woman rubbed my hands and warned me not to let them touch hot water while they were this cold. The scene was fresh in my memory. Sadly the fishing cabin in which I had spent the night was now abandoned and dilapidated.

Rampant Rodents

The first time I saw Ngoring Lake it looked like something out of a fairytale. It was my first glimpse of the clearer water of the Yellow River. Now, 20 years later it was a horror story. The river's flow had dwindled, the water quality was bad, and the grassland was being overtaken by desert. The eagles, yellow wolves, foxes and wild cats that had been the natural enemies of the rodent population had either been killed or driven away, allowing the mice and pika to take over the grassland. They burrow countless holes for their homes and eat the grassroots. As a result, the grasses die, yaks and sheep have nothing to graze, and herdsmen have to move away. The local government has organized a team to combat the rodents, building perches to attract the eagles back to the area, in hopes that they will control the menace



naturally. Nature has its own method of balancing wildlife, but man's disregard can easily harm this balance.

Between Ngoring and Gyaring lakes lies Niutou (Yak Head) Hill, the top of which affords a magnificent panoramic view over both lakes. On our way there, however, we saw rodent holes everywhere and mice and pika as big as rabbits running freely. The land was uneven with their digging and the soil was in bad shape. Zheng said he used to love taking photos of the grassland, but now he cannot help weeping.

'Five-Star' Lodgings at Gyaring Lake

We drove about 90 km that day and arrived at the home of a family living by Gyaring Lake at dusk. The Sangye brothers had prepared tents and padded quilts for us to spend the night in the wilderness. But the

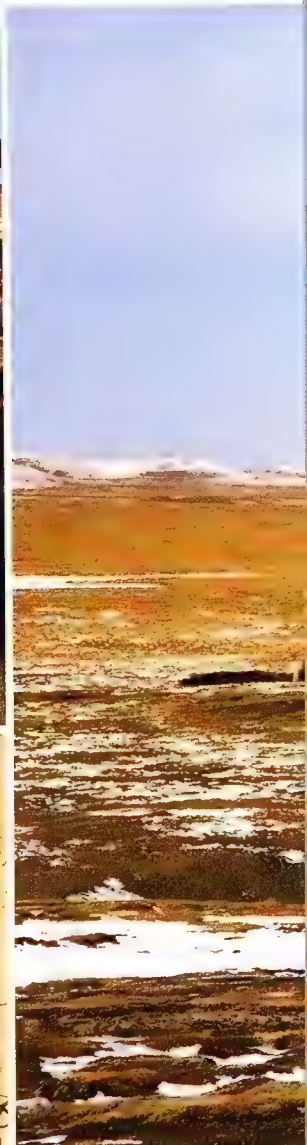


temperature had dropped to -20°C , and there was the danger of being attacked by rodents and other animals. Our drivers spoke in Tibetan to explain our situation to the herdsman and his family. They welcomed us warmly and the hostess offered the five of us a small side room. The tiny, dusty room had obviously not been used for some time. But it had a cast iron stove with which we could warm the room and cook a meal. The three of us slept on a wooden pallet, while the Sangye brothers bedded down on thick cushions on the ground. It was pure luxury to be able to spend the night in an actual house in the Yellow River source area, every bit as good as a five-star hotel. We lit the stove and the room was soon toasty. Then, we cooked butter tea and instant noodles. Together with the cakes, pickled vegetables and *zanba* (roasted qingke barley flour), they made a delicious supper.

After a sound sleep, we continued our journey the next morning. Xingxiu (Star) Lake, of which I had dreamed many times, is a vast area of wetlands in the Yellow River source area. Its numerous lakes, large and small, once shimmered in the sunshine, like galaxies glinting in the night sky, hence the name. Due to its remote location, and its frequent appearance in stories about ancient Chinese martial arts heroes, it takes on a rather romantic or mysterious quality in the minds of most people. Unfortunately, many of the lakes have dried up due to the water shortage of recent years. Standing on the terrace, where King Gesar once gave orders to his generals, I saw the 'stars', but they were not shining.



Dangzhou told me he loved the sea, not lakes like these, but vast oceans lined with palm trees, beaches and ladies in swimsuits, so frequently depicted in calendar photos. I was born on an island, so the sea is nothing special to me. To a man who has never travelled out of Qinghai, a real sea, rather than a lake, however vast, means a great deal. He could not understand why we were making such a difficult trip





1. Boarding school students from the Yellow River Source Central School in Matod Township. Most come from regional herding families.

2. A young Tibetan girl.

3. The Yellow River originates from several springs at the foot of Yagradagze Mountain (alt. 5,214 metres).

just to see the source of the Yellow River.

Schools at the Source

In the afternoon, we approached the Yoigilangleb River, part of the headwaters of the Yellow River. Until now, I had only known it as a geographical term, but now I was about to walk on the frozen surface and scoop up the water with my hands. It would be amazing! As I thought about this during the next 50 km, I was as happy as a little boy.

School was just ending for the day when we arrived at Matod Township. The uniformed pupils were curious about us. They drew near, asking us to take their photos. They attended a boarding school. More than 100 pupils were from herders' families from the surrounding areas. The teachers were mostly young Qinghai University graduates who had volunteered to teach in this remote area. There were four classes in the school: preschool and grades one to three. Grade four students attended school in the

county town of Qumarleb. For most parents, of course, it isn't easy to send a child outside the county for school.

Another school, located five kilometres from the Yellow River source, was run under even more difficult conditions. The herders were not willing to send their children to school due to the long distance and inconvenient transport. Zimay, the schoolmaster, visited every tent on horseback to try to persuade the families. By promising to provide meals to the pupils, he was able to enrol 10. But the school was facing financial problems, and he had no money to pay the teachers and cooks.

Standing at the gate of the first school on the Yellow River source, I could see the high peak of Yagradagze Mountain, which resembles a crane amidst a group of chickens. The mountain is sacred to Tibetans. It can also be said to be the soul of the Chinese nation, as the Yellow River, which fermented and nourished Chinese civilization, originates from



2

the five springs at its foot.

A Son Returns

I could not contain my excitement once we were within five kilometres of the river source that we had come all this way to see!

As the jeep wound up the mountain in ever decreasing circles, I imagined what the first drop of water into the Yellow River would look like, and how I would feel when I touched the source of this great river. Suddenly, a row of pagodas appeared before us. Dangzhou announced: 'We are arriving!' We carried on up a higher slope to see a group of stone tablets marking the source. 'Oh! Finally, I'm here!' After 20 long years, the journey was complete.

Zheng was even more overcome. He said nothing, but handed me his camera, which is very unusual behaviour for a professional photographer. Then, he knelt before one of the stone tablets and cried. I understood his feelings as those that a wandering son expresses for his mother when he returns to his hometown. At this moment, he allowed himself to be a child crying in his mother's embrace.

After wiping away his tears, Zheng told me that he had placed the tablet here 20 years earlier, during his first visit to the Yellow River's source. It bears an inscription carved by the hand of Li Keran, a famous painter and calligrapher from Xuzhou in Jiangsu Province. Li gave it to Zheng as a gift before he began that trip. The carved lines, originally penned by Tang-dynasty poet Li Bai, read: 'The water of the Yellow River comes from heaven, runs towards the sea and never returns. The purpose of putting these words here, Zheng said, was to remind him to keep the water source in mind whenever he takes a drink of water.'

I did not get to observe the course of the water dropped from heaven, because the mouths of the five springs were covered in snow and ice. What a pity! But since Zheng Yunfeng has been here eight times, why shouldn't I come for another visit? 

Translated by Gloria Shang

1. Stupas at the source of the Yellow River in front of the feeder springs.

2. Zheng Yunfeng kneels and weeps at the monument he placed here 20 years ago.

Travel Tips for San Jiang Yuan

Photos & Text • Ma Yiu Chun



Xining Bus Station



Qunke Changchun Lamb's Rib Restaurant



Black Pulu Tibetan Bar



Xuguang Hotel



Madoi county seat



My drivers - the father and two sons of the Sangye family

A glacier-covered land, San Jiang Yuan has a severe climate and difficult terrain. At the source of the Yangtze, for instance, it can take several days on horseback to reach places that vehicles cannot. A local Tibetan guide is a must, and you should take along enough provisions and the right equipment. A tourist should not venture into the wilderness beyond the Tuotuo River Station along the Qinghai-Tibet Railway alone. The source of the Lancang River, located in Mayun Township, Zadoi County, in west Yushu Prefecture, is inaccessible by vehicle. The Mayun township seat can be reached by car, but from there you must continue on horseback with a Tibetan guide to travel upstream to the very source. By comparison, the source of the Yellow River is much more accessible.

Whichever source you wish to see, Xining in Qinghai Province is the ideal starting point.

Long-distance Transport to and in Xining

Flights

There is no direct flight from Hong Kong to Xining. Tourists may take a flight from Guangzhou to Xining. The single flight ticket costs about 1,600 yuan but discounts may be available in the slower seasons. Xining Airport is about 30 km from downtown.

Trains

The railway from Guangzhou to Lhasa has opened and Xining is one of its stops. Trains T264/T265 leave Guangzhou at 10:29 on the even-numbered dates of each month and stop at Xining midway. The journey from Guangzhou to Xining takes about 31 hours.

Buses

The Xining Long-distance Bus Station lies next to the Huangshuibian River to the right and in front of the railway station. The passenger transport lines are extensive and travel to most county seats in the province, including the Madoi county seat, Jiegu Town — capital of Yushu Prefecture, and Zadoi county seat.

Urban Transport in Xining

Buses and taxis are available in the urban areas of Xining. There are many bus routes, but they may be confusing for the average sightseer. We advise taking a taxi; the minimum price is around 6 yuan, and usually a passenger does not have to pay more than that if his or her destination is a hotel or the railway station. A trip inside the urban area usually costs no more than 10 yuan. In addition, it costs almost the same if two or three share a taxi.

Dining & Entertainment in Xining

Qunke Changchun Lamb's Rib Restaurant 群科長春手抓食府

At No. 202, Dazhong Street (opposite Shulin Lane), this restaurant is famous for serving local Qinghai ethnic group dishes, the best known of which are the roasted lamb's rib (*shouzhau yangrou*) and gigots (leg of mutton or lamb).

Bayi Hot-Pot Restaurant 八一火鍋城

The main restaurant is located at No. 65, Dongguan Street (opposite the International Finance Building), and there is a branch at No. 14, Huayuan South Street (100 metres south of the Hualian Supermarket). The mutton is must-try!

Ziwei Restaurant 滋味館

Located in Zhifang Street, the town's 'culinary street' specializing in Hangzhou

dishes from South China, this is a nice surprise in the relatively remote Northwest.

Black Pulu Tibetan Bar 黑磴藏吧

This bar near the Xining Hotel on Qiyi Street is run by a Tibetan from the Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Decorated in full Tibetan style, it serves delicious, authentic Tibetan food.

Accommodation in Xining

Qinghai Hotel 青海賓館

Located at No. 158, Huanghe Road, west of the Children's Park, this four-star hotel opened in 1991. Standard rooms range from 228 to 416 yuan.

Tel: (971) 614 4888

Features: Popular with tour groups, this well-appointed hotel is farther from the downtown Big Cross (*Da Shi Zi*) area of Xining, but can be reached quickly and conveniently by taxi.

Xining Hotel 西寧賓館

At No. 348, Qiyi Road, this hotel is 4 km from the railway station. With a 50-year history, it looks relatively shabby despite its three-star rating, though parts of it have recently been redecorated. Standard rooms range from 198 to 488 yuan.

Features: Close to restaurants, bars and shops selling local specialties, the hotel is about a 1-km trip south of Bei Da Street, close to Xining's Big Cross area.

Tel: (971) 846 1000

Xuguang Hotel 旭光賓館

At No. 2, Huayuan Southern Road, this small hotel is cheap and clean with quality service and free breakfast. Standard rooms range from 98 to 168 yuan, and an individual bed is priced at just 20 yuan. If a large group books ahead, the hotel will provide transport to and from the airport/train station/bus station at no extra charge.

Features: Conveniently located and close to a large Hualian Supermarket (Huayuan Branch) where tourists can buy a wide variety of local foods, the hotel is about a 15-minute walk from Big Cross.

Tel: (971) 491 1555

Accommodation in Madoi

Country Guest House 縣招待所

The only choice for tourists, this hostel is on Xi Da Street. The rooms are fairly large and equipped with coal stoves and electric or thermal blankets. However, guests must share the bathrooms.

Transport in Madoi

Jeeps can be hired at the Madoi Bus Station for trips to Ngoring Lake, Gyaring Lake, Mt Niutou and the source of the Yellow River. Tibetan brothers Sangye Yangcan (nickname Jinliang) and Sangye Dangzhou are skilled drivers familiar with the landforms around the source of the Yellow River. The trip to Mt Niutou is a 110-km trip taking about 2.5 hours. The cost of hiring a jeep for the roundtrip is 300 yuan. The trip to the stele at the source of the Yellow River takes about 4 to 5 days, and the fares are about 3,000 yuan. But the price may vary according to weather and season.

Sangye Yangcan: (975) 834 5897

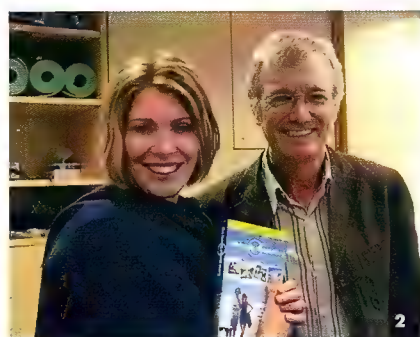
Sangye Dangzhou: (975) 834 5239 / 138 9715 2575



Never a Lonely Planet

—Talking with Tony & Maureen Wheeler

Article • Kristy Wong (photos courtesy of Lonely Planet & Periplus Editions)



In the dictionary, 'lonely' generally has a negative meaning. However, for one couple who have spent more than 30 years travelling the world and recording their experiences in one of the world's most popular guidebook series, as long as you love travel, the word 'lonely' can never have a bad connotation — not when you've got a 'Lonely Planet' in your bag!

Tony and Maureen Wheeler, the founders of Australian travel guidebook kingdom Lonely Planet (LP), released their latest book, *The Lonely Planet Story*, in September 2006 and embarked on a worldwide promotional tour. I was lucky enough to meet them during their short stay in Hong Kong. Two days later, the busy couple were already in Beijing, promoting the company's brand-new simplified Chinese version of an LP travel guide.

Lonely Planet = Mission Possible

In business for nearly 34 years, Lonely Planet is regarded as the pioneer of self-help travel guides. Its list of titles, which number well over 600, cover nearly every corner of the world — from such vibrant, bustling cities as New York and Hong Kong to areas as remote as Antarctica. From the service-oriented traveller to the backpacking enthusiast, LP guides have something for everyone. LP even runs its own TV company (www.lonelyplanet.tv).



Websites and Travel Products of Lonely Planet:

- English website: www.lonelyplanet.com
- Chinese website: www.lonelyplanet.com.cn
- TV station: www.lonelyplanet.tv
- Photo library: www.lonelyplanetimages.com
- LP business: www.lonelyplanet.biz

The world's first LP travel guide series (Australia, Germany, Europe) published by Joint Publishing (Beijing) in simplified Chinese



In their early days, LP's main selling point lay in the fact that they did guidebooks to places nobody else covered, but times have changed. 'We started doing guidebooks to Asia, and then Africa and South America, when there was little attention paid to those regions. Today, when we cover everywhere and so does our competition, size and experience is probably our main advantage,' Tony explains. They prefer not to use advertising in their guides, so in order to maintain a financial balance, 'we have to sell enough books for them to be profitable'. This was especially true in the early years, before they'd made a name for themselves. However, the company is committed 100% to travel and therefore is willing to do a certain number of books that in themselves are not financially viable. 'With some titles we accept that having the book on our list is more important than the financial return. We have a reputation for producing titles to more unusual locations than any other publisher and we certainly don't want to lose that reputation.'

Writing for LP

Today, the Wheelers still spend more than six months of the year travelling, but it's not possible for them to compile and write every guidebook. A large team of writers and correspondents is essential for the expanding company. At last count they employed some 350 experienced writers from more than 40 countries and regions, with expertise in over 70 languages.

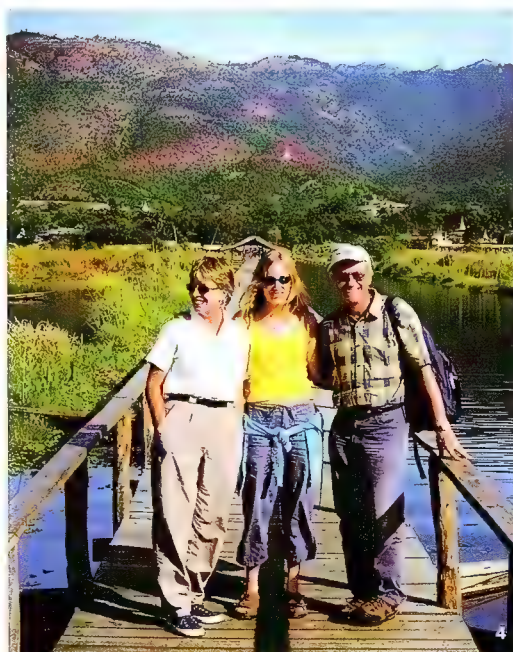
Life as an LP writer sounds both exciting and challenging. Tony recommends that would-be LP writers have a serious interest in travel. 'Travel experience and a real love of travel, ability to write, often command of the local language and accuracy are essential. The bigger the destination the more researchers we need. The individual opinions of our researchers are very important to us and they should be independent and unbiased. The fact that we take no adverts in our guidebooks and nobody pays to appear in our books is very important to us.' Therefore, many LP writers prefer not to use their real names when researching a destination.

The company allows researchers to utilise information given by local tourism bureaus and will check information supplied by readers. But whenever they update a travel guide, they have to go back to the destination and double-check everything. The Wheelers are adamant that there is no substitute for this.

LP also relies on reader feedback. According to Tony, 'Complaints from readers are often beyond our control; prices go up, places close, standards drop (or sometimes climb) but of course it's always valuable to know about changes. If, however, one of our writers really has been inaccurate then we're going to have to improve our work on that book, possibly by using a new writer in future. Complaints from hotels or restaurants may be because they don't like what we have written about them although we try not to be negative if we don't have to. We would rather recommend a good establishment than simply downgrade a bad one.'

Step by Step into China

China is of course one of the Wheelers' target destinations. Tony was particularly impressed with Shanghai: 'Shanghai is amazing and the view across



1. The first group of LP staff in 1972. Tony crouches down in the centre, while Maureen stands second from left at the back. Now LP is an international publisher with more than 400 employees.

2. The couple spoke about their new book, *The Lonely Planet Story*, in Sept 2006 at the YWCA, Hong Kong. (by Kristy Wong)

3. Tony is also passionate about technology and cars. In the early 1980s, he started working with the then advanced Century T10 computer.

4. Since 1986, Lonely Planet charitable funds have helped needy places around the world, such as remote Maing Thauk village beside Inle Lake, Burma (Myanmar). LP built this bridge to make life easier for the locals. (by Stan Armington)



1. The Wheeler family in Java, Indonesia.

2. Tashi and Kieran enjoy special transport in Peru. (by Tony Wheeler)

3. In this small hotel room in Singapore, Tony and Maureen finished their second book, *South-East Asia on a Shoestring*. Maureen is working on the book's maps. (by Tony Wheeler)

4. When in Rome... In Bali, Tony learns to transplant rice seeds, which he describes as backbreaking work. (by Richard I' Anson)

5. The newlyweds in London, 1971. (by Peter Schulz)



the Bund is unforgettable, it looks like a city from a science fiction movie.' He also enjoys exploring smaller towns. 'It's fascinating to see how buses, trains and public transport work in small towns well off the tourist route. For example, in 2005 travelling from Xiamen to Fuzhou I changed buses in Quanzhou and between the buses I jumped on a motorcycle taxi, zipped across town to visit the Kaiyuan Temple and checked the hull of a recently excavated Song Dynasty junk displayed in an adjacent building.'

In early November 2004, LP took its first step into the China market — via the Internet. They have co-operated with Yahoo Hong Kong to allow its website to transmit travel information on more than 120 countries and regions from LP guidebooks in traditional Chinese. In September 2006, LP co-operated with Joint Publishing (Beijing) and published the world's first simplified Chinese LP series of Europe,

Australia and Germany, while books on Britain, Italy, Canada, the United States and South-East Asia are coming soon.

Tony says a lot of work goes into the Chinese versions, because direct translating is not enough to ensure a useful guidebook. 'A great deal of adaptation has to take place, for example embassies, visa regulations, transport to the country in question, all need to be adapted. We expect as the series develops we will tailor the books more specifically to Chinese tastes and interests. We hope the book will do well, but although it is hard to have any real expectations so soon in a new venture we are already cautiously optimistic.'

When asked for his perspective on the China market, he says, 'I think the Chinese are very interested in travel and are very curious about the world. However, it may take many years before tourism is as big an industry in China as it is in the west, so we will go slowly with our Chinese business.' LP would like to add Chinese writers to its very international group of travel writers and that will probably come first with local Chinese writers adding special sections to the books. 'We do already have Jinghui Cai working for us in Beijing,' Tony adds.

Still Travelling

Like other LP fans, I am curious about the Wheelers' attitudes towards travel. How do they choose a destination? Their answers are simple — Tony says they consider 'how interesting they [the places] seem. Often it's because a place is in the news or has recently become of special interest, therefore we may be thinking about covering it in

some fashion.' They are also careful to plan a trip around their personalities and other factors. Tony believes a traveller must ask him or herself, 'First of all what are your interests? If you are interested in wildlife, culture, architecture or landscape, all these will affect the decision of where you go. Then you might consider how much time you have and what the options are in getting there and travelling around, and of course what level of comfort you need — do you really want a relaxing trip or a trip where you explore? It is not necessary to take long trips; you should only travel for as long as you are happy to be travelling.'

The couple's travel 'addiction' has remained strong. Asked if there were any places in the world they never intend to visit, their reply is a single word — No. Although their very first renowned publication, *Across Asia on the Cheap*, is no longer in print, they would still love to do the trip again some day when it becomes possible. They also hope to explore many parts of Africa and South America and are planning to visit Mongolia for the first time in August 2007... To them, the world never gets any smaller.

No matter what 'Lonely Planet' means to you — a DIY travel guide leader, the 'Yellow Bible', or the intrepid spirit of the Wheelers themselves — it is a monument to a very basic love of travel. Theirs is an amazing story, from the first hand-written manuscript stapled together by an adventurous young couple in the early 70s to today's international publishing



empire that has inspired countless travellers to follow in their footsteps. Along the way they raised a daughter, Tashi, and a son, Kieran. When I recall the affectionate eye contact that passed between Tony and Maureen during their seminar in Hong Kong last September, I'm also convinced that their true love for each other and strong spirit ensure that these two lucky people are anything but lonely!

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The Lonely Planet Story

Reviewed by Beth McNeilly

After more than 30 years in the travel business, Lonely Planet founders Tony and Maureen Wheeler invite us along on another adventure. Written by Tony, with commentary by Maureen appearing throughout, *The Lonely Planet Story* details their journey from the day they met in 1971 and their marriage exactly one year later, quickly followed by their first major trip, to eventually becoming the world's best-known travel publisher.

At one point Maureen writes, 'Tony and I tended to make decisions quite spontaneously.' When the pair decided to drive across the continent from London to Asia in 1972, they bought a second-hand mini-van that had a habit of breaking down even before they officially left. That van, with all the repairs it required along the way,

reflects their approach to life, continually adapting and adjusting to the highs and lows to get where they are today.

They eventually sold the car in Kabul and carried on thumbing their way across India, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. In Bali they ended up as crew on a yacht bound for Australia, the country that would soon become their new home. Plagued by several setbacks, including dwindling fresh water supplies, that voyage took far longer than expected and provides just one of several engrossing stories that fill the book.

After fielding so many questions about how they made the trip, the couple eventually started writing down hints and tips on where to stay and how to survive, often in places with very little, if any, tourism infrastructure. Eventually, they realised people might pay for such information and compiled all their experiences in *Across Asia on the Cheap*, followed up two years later by *South-east Asia on a Shoestring*.

Of course it wasn't all fame and fortune straight away. The book recounts the 'real' jobs they worked while setting up their fledgling publishing venture, the months spent rapidly researching on the road followed by marathon writing sessions to put the books together as quickly as possible to produce the most up-to-date guides on the market, the friends, co-workers and even 'rival' publishers who helped them along and what it was like raising two children when one parent was often halfway round the world. They also discuss the very real impact that SARS, 9/11 and other incidents have had on the travel business. Accounts of their attempts to improve living conditions in the countries they visit and their concerns about the effect of air travel on the environment are interspersed with tales of elephants adept at retrieving lost property and the shock of finding out that your last name has a rather pornographic meaning in another language.

Tony writes with an attention to detail that mirrors the company's meticulous guides, and his sense of what is most interesting about each chapter of their lives keeps the reader engaged. Only a few pages on the succession of computer systems used by LP over the years slows the pace, but written by a confessed 'gear head', its inclusion is understandable. Punctuated by Maureen's candid observations, *The Lonely Planet Story* introduces a couple who aren't afraid to open up and be themselves, with each other or with us, and that makes for very refreshing reading. I highly recommend retracing this remarkable journey with them.



by Tony and Maureen Wheeler
Periplus Editions, US\$16.95
(available at all leading bookstores)



Volcanic Spas in Kunming

Photos & Article by Li Zhixiong

A Korean friend once told me he had heard about a volcanic spa near Kunming and wanted me to seek it out. Yes, there were a number of hot springs around Kunming, but volcanic? With a list of phone numbers at hand, I set out to track any, if whether any of them were volcanic.

Spa: A Lifestyle Choice

Located around 30 minutes from Kunming along the Lao Shi An Highway is Yangzong Lake and the lakeside village of Tangchi. With a surface temperature of 72°C, the hot springs here have been known since ancient times. Adjacent the lake lies the Brilliant Spa resort featuring a variety of spa pools made from volcanic rock and spouting spring water rich with nourishing minerals from the underlying volcanic rock. I had found my volcanic spa!

Inside the resort I struck up a conversation with a regular. Mr Lin works and lives in Singapore but enjoys bringing his family to Kunming for golfing holidays. On his last visit he discovered this spa resort opposite his usual golf club and immediately fell in love with it. The Lin family are spa regulars, visiting spas on all of their overseas holidays. Mrs Lin especially raved about the Brilliant Resort spa experience: bathing in the hot water scented with natural oils and breathing in the cleansing steam; or taking a massage inside



a natural wooden pavilion while listening to the gentle waves lapping against the shore and the sound of a far off flute calming the heart and mind. Like a fish in the sea, free and without a care.

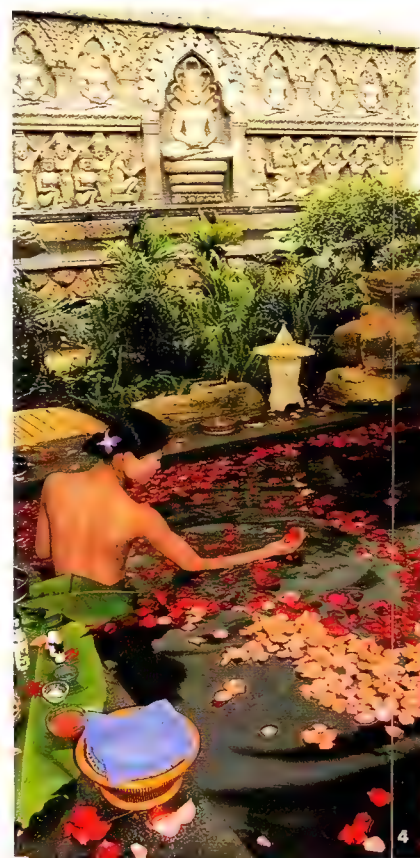
The Heights of Spa Experience

In the restaurant I met an old Japanese lady, glowing and radiant as if she had just emerged from a spa bath. Turns out she had! She told me that in Japan volcanic spas are considered to be the best. In her home in Tokyo she has an expensive volcanic rock that she uses for bathing on special occasions, placing it in the wooden tub with her and absorbing its elements. In the spa resort, she is now surrounded by volcanic rock — from the hotel room, to the bathing pools to the floor tiles, they are all made from volcanic rock. When she stands amid the steam from the bathing pools and looks around, all she can see is volcanic rock — 'Absolutely heavenly!' she says.

I wanted to try the aromatherapy massage, but instead went straight in to experience the volcanic spa bath. I laid a towel across the bath step and eased myself into the 70°C water bubbling beneath me. The sulfuric steam permeated my every pore, washing my skin thoroughly with the cleaning minerals. Listening to the soft pan pipe music, I slipped into a dream.

For those with poor mobility in the lower body, a hot spa bath can do wonders to relieve the pain that penetrates the bones. By relaxing in the bath, breathing deeply and visualizing the work of the veins and nerve

1. Yoga trains stamina and concentration.
2. Enjoy a soothing massage to the sound of gentle pan-pipe music.
3. The spa resort features a variety of bathing pools, all made from volcanic rock rich in rare minerals.
4. The luxurious scented spa pools will transport you to another world.





system to transport the minerals to their destination, the pain gently and calmly melts away.

Yoga: Raising Spiritual Energy

This was my first contact with yoga. The instructor told us to use deep breathing to expel all thoughts and worries from our systems and to hold the poses long enough to completely train our stamina and concentration. This was real spiritual work.

Among the students I met a woman who appeared to have the perfect life: highly educated, she had overseas permanent residence, good salary, car, house and exotic vacations. But half a year earlier, a spinal displacement almost took her life. She was unable to move any part of her body from the lower back down and only the soothing spa water was able to dispel her pain. Every day she took the waters and visualized away her pain. Gradually the pain faded and the spa lifestyle has since become part of her hectic city life.

Translated by Bret Sutcliffe

1. Brilliant Spa Resort is located on Yang Zong Lake.
2. A completely natural environment will free one's mind from worry.



The Brilliant Spa Resort has over 26 different spa pools each with different styles and functions. They are divided into 4 main areas:

Aromatherapy Area: three pools feature aromatherapy and three pools feature flower water. Surrounded by the beautiful surroundings, flower petals and the aroma of essential oils, taking a bath in these pools bring such benefits as balancing inner energy flows, cleansing and support skin tone and opening the body to release all anxiety and negative thoughts.

Forest Area: Set amid waterfalls and lush plant life, these nine bathing pools are constructed from volcanic rock and feature a thermal steam room in the centre.

Medicinal Area: This area uses modern aqua-medicine techniques such as massage, water pressure, spraying and revolving water jets to stimulate pressure points on the body in order to relieve tiredness.

Sea View Area: The 6 pools in this area are constructed from rare and valuable materials such as volcanic rock, scented poplar wood and precious stones. To further add to the tranquil experience, the pools overlook gentle waves lapping the lakeshore.

Travel Tips

Add: Brilliant Spa Resort, Yang Zong Lake, Kunming, Yunnan Province, China

Tel: (86) 871-767 2666

Fax: (86) 871-767 3666

Website: www.brilliantspa.com

Getting there: Board the shuttle bus to Tangchi Town from the East Kunming Long Distance Bus Station. The journey takes around 30 minutes. Alight at Yangzong Lake and follow the coloured flags to reach your destination.

Accommodation: There are a range of choices available in the on-site hotel, villas or VIP suites. Twin rooms start from 980 yuan. (30% off on weekdays)

Dining: Brilliant Spa Resort features Chinese and international cuisine choices.

Spa: A wide selection of spa treatments are available including French aromatherapy, Swiss massage, volcanic oil treatments and more. Prices start from 588 yuan.



Rejuvenation

in Hong Kong and Macau

What are your plans for Chinese New Year? Going to the movies, collecting auspicious 'red packets', or just resting at home like a lazy cat? Staying in town can be a lot of fun, or if you want a short getaway, take a break in nearby Macau.

Hong
Kong

Learning Kungfu at Tai O

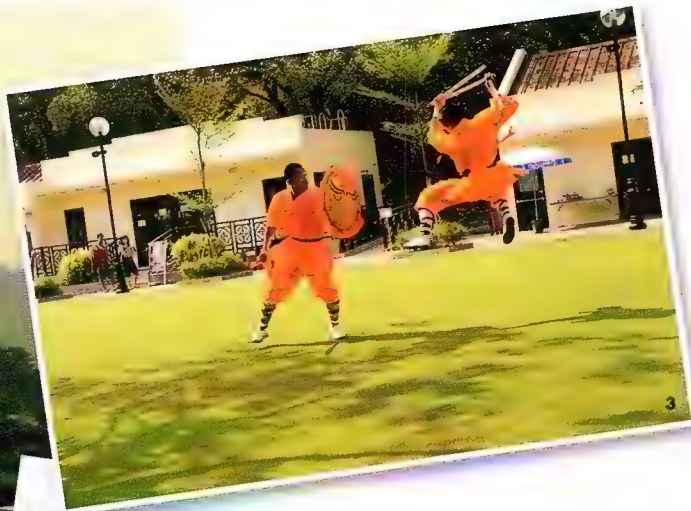
Photos • Kristy Wong

Have you ever thought of staying overnight at Tai O, the fishing village on Lantau, Hong Kong's largest outlying island? Or learning kungfu and practising your Mandarin? If you want an exceptional holiday in Hong Kong, visit the Tai O Shaolin Wushu Culture Centre.



Since it first opened in July 2006, I longed to take a martial arts course at the centre. Luckily, I was able to join a two-day/one-night course at the centre with a friend last November. We arrived in Tai O early one Saturday and toured around this beautiful fishing village until sunset. After watching the sun go down at around 6 pm, we took a leisurely walk to the centre by following the prominent signs.

Soon we were having dinner and being introduced to our 'classmates'. We didn't have a packed schedule the first night, although we did have a chance to attend a lesson on Zen philosophy taught by Master Yong Xin, the oldest Shaolin master at the centre. Afterwards, following a younger master, Wang Meng, we did an hour of warm-up exercises — preparation for the next day's 'challenge'. Then we



1. Master Wang and Master Liu are young yet experienced in kungfu.
2. Traditional stilt houses in Tai O fishing village.
3. The serious 'fighting' is actually a cool show of the two masters.
4. Can you hold this position for one minute?
5. The Shaolin Wushu Culture Centre welcomes the public to take courses.
6. Clean and tidy the hostel room.

spent the rest of the evening chatting with the Shaolin masters. We sat on the neatly mown lawn in the middle of the centre, sharing our thoughts and doubts about wushu (martial arts) while gazing up at the stars until we felt tired, just before midnight.

On the second day, our first activity was to climb the hill behind the Shaolin centre at 6:30 am — on an empty stomach! Lead by Master Liu Xiangbiao, we spent 15 minutes warming up and then ran to the foot of the hill. Liu taught us a set of shaolin movements, and we had to practise them as we climbed to the top. Once there, we were worn out and floppy, like broken puppets. But Master Liu's 'kind' appraisal of our performance was 'You guys are too weak and not serious enough'. And this was just the start of the day!

We were grateful for breakfast when we returned to the centre. We ate rice porridge and boiled eggs — simple but tasty. Soon after, we started learning the most important part of the programme. Master Wang was to teach us the 'Basic 18 Shaolin Movements' — which I have since found are really good for building up the muscles, and the spirit, for beginners. Since most of us were new to wushu, we all struggled to learn and remember the movements. At the end, each of us had to perform the complete set for Master Wang, so as to successfully 'graduate' from the course and earn a certificate.

As we practised, I recalled a principle in the centre's introductory notes, which states: 'Bitterness is the first thing to learn in wushu, while persistence is the most important'. After attending the two-day course, I fully agree. The Shaolin masters are more hard-working than any of us — besides travelling between Tai O and town every day to lead other wushu lessons, they study Cantonese and English in their leisure time.

The centre was established by the Hong Kong Culture Association Charitable Foundation (HKCACF) and is a non-profit organization. You may not feast on seafood or enjoy luxurious service (although some T-shirts and souvenirs related to the centre are provided), but you're sure to have a memorable Tai O experience!



Hong Kong Shaolin Wushu Culture Centre
Add: Shek Tsai Po, Tai O, Lantau, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2985 8898

The Masters also host lessons at town centre (Shuang Wan/ North Point/ Prince Edward), for more information, your may click to this website: www.shaolincc.hk

Hong
Kong

Let's Go ! Ngong Ping 360

Linking Tung Chung town centre to Ngong Ping on Lantau Island, the Ngong Ping Skyrail is a visually spectacular 5.7km journey.



After our exhausting Shaolin martial arts course, my friend and I decided to continue our efforts to learn more about Buddhism — in an easier way! We took a bus from Tai O to Tung Chung to try out the Ngong Ping Skyrail. My heart rejoiced as the cable car started to glide into the air, and we anticipated a great view.

Tung Chung Town The ride took about 20 ~ 25 minutes, during which we could appreciate an amazing panoramic view of Tung Chung Town and Tung Chung Bay;

North Lantau Country Park The skyrail crossed back over the shores of Lantau Island and soon entered North Lantau Country Park. It was fascinating to watch the environment change from bustling town to tranquil, green countryside;

Tian Tan Buddha Statue It's been almost five years since I visited the Tian Tan Buddha, right after I graduated from college, and I was truly moved to view the giant 34-metre tall statue atop Ngong Ping Plateau. And I could visit nearby Ngong Ping Village at the same time.

The NP 360 Experience

1 Ngong Ping Village As lunchtime neared, my friend and I arrived at Ngong Ping Village, adjacent to the Ngong Ping Skyrail Terminal and the Tian Tan Buddha Statue. The village boasts several major attractions — Walking with Buddha, the Monkey's Tale Theatre and the Ngong Ping Tea House — as well as a diverse array of retail, dining and entertainment experiences. We enjoyed watching street performers, striking kungfu demonstrations and even a Chinese opera show.

2 Walking with Buddha While I have not obtained a deep knowledge of Buddhism, I have been captivated by the dramatic life of Siddhartha since I was small. It was amazing to trace his life again in the Cave Theatre. A lively animated film has been made about Siddhartha's story, which was easy to follow. In the dim light, our eyes were gradually led to an ancient Buddhist statue. In the 'Hall of Bodhi Leaves', I picked a 'leaf' from the Bodhi Tree. Inside was the 'Bodhi Thought' — a meaningful Buddhist poem — telling me to let go of life's unhappy encounters and feelings.

3 Monkey's Tale Theatre This multi-media theatre shows the famous Buddhist Jataka stories. The story we watched was about how a selfish monkey was moved by the teachings of the Monkey King, and became humble and kind at last.

4 Ngong Ping Tea House After lunch we stopped in this tea house. Operated by Wing Wah, a venerable Hong Kong company famous for its moon cakes and air-dried sausages, the tea house was set amongst beautifully landscaped gardens. We appreciated demonstrations of traditional Chinese tea ceremonies and also bought some teas, such as Pu'er and Wulong. But my favourite treats were the 'wife cakes'.

5 Food & Beverage There is no chance of going hungry because eateries abound in Ngong Ping Village! Traditional Chinese cuisine fans can dine at Pak Lok Restaurant, which serves Guangdong Chiuchau cuisine, while Western food lovers may like Euro Go Go with its fusion European dishes and coffees.

Ngong Ping 360

Add: 11 Tat Tung Road, Tung Chung, Lantau Island, Hong Kong.

Tel: (852) 2109 9888 Fax: (852) 2109 9179

Opening hours: Mon-Fri 10:00 ~ 18:00; Sat-Sun 10:00 ~ 18:30

Journey of Enlightenment Package: HK\$145/155 (adult); HK\$75/80 (children)

Website: www.np360.com.hk

1. Taking the Ngong Ping Skyrail is the best way to overview the Tung Chung Town Centre and North Lantau Country Park.

2. Sunset at the Tian Tan Buddha.

3. Inside the gallery of Walking with Buddha.

4. Monkey's Talk Theatre.

5. A number of Chinese tea can be tasted at the Ngong Ping Tea House. (by Mickey Ching)

6. Appetizing dessert — sticky rice cakes with mango. (by Mickey Ching)

7. Euro Go Go. (by Mickey Ching)





Next Stop — HK Wetland Park

Leaving Lantau Island or the 'lung of Hong Kong', our focus turned to a place faraway in the north of the territory - Hong Kong Wetland Park. Opened in May 2006, the Wetland Park is a great place to take photos and an excellent in-town retreat.



1



2

Wildlife Sanctuary

Occupying 61 hectares, Hong Kong Wetland Park demonstrates the diversity of Hong Kong's wetland ecosystem and highlights the need for ecological conservation. The park is also close to the Mai Po marshes and Hau Hoi Bay, two other important nature reserves in Hong Kong.

We started our tour of the park in the afternoon. Highlights included:

1 Wildside Walk This closely follows the boundary of the reserve, going through marshland, woodland and grassland. I took many pictures of butterflies and dragonflies;

2 Stream Walk Rivers and streams are home to several animals and organisms, but many hide from humans or are only active at night. This path takes you through the different sections of rivers and streams where these creatures reside;

3 Succession Walk Different marine plants prefer different bodies of water. Walking along this wooden path, visitors can see how these plants have adjusted to their changing environment to grow in a wetland forest;

4 Mangrove Boardwalk We thoroughly enjoyed being in the mangrove, which we viewed from a floating bridge. The wildlife here is fascinating to watch;

5 Fishpond Hide From this two-storey bird-watching hut, we could view the vast wetland of Hau Hoi Bay. I was stunned that Hong Kong still has such primitive natural scenery;

6 Riverside Hide As its name suggests, this is where visitors can watch birds and observe the environment of the whole park. At this stop we learned the importance of Hau Hoi Bay wetland to the aquatic birds;

7 Mudflat Hide Mud lands provide food for migratory birds. The hide allows visitors to inspect the 'management' of the mud lands during all four seasons, as well as observe the behaviour of migratory birds;

1. Kingfisher.

2. Heron.

3. Wideside Walk.

4. The Hong Kong Wetland Park is located in Tin Shui Wai.

5. A tropical marshland environment.

8 Wetland Discovery Centre Many primary and secondary students were here carrying out interesting experiments to help them understand rivers and wildlife;

9 Pui Pui's Home Since being first discovered in Hong Kong in 2003, this celebrity saltwater crocodile has been of great public interest. My friend and I were thrilled to finally 'meet' Pui Pui in the flesh, although she rather coquettishly kept her back to us.

Getting to Know Wetlands

Exhibits in this area showcase an overview of the functions and values of wetlands, the Ramsar Convention, and the importance of wetlands to wildlife.

1 Living Wetlands This gallery presents wetlands throughout the world from the poles to the tropics. Through these different wetland exhibits the gallery has created three habitats: Frozen North, Tropical Swamp and Hong Kong Wetlands.

2 Human Culture The Central Show explains the importance of wetlands to human life, especially in river deltas and streams. I was most impressed by the large replica of the famous painting by Zhang Zeduan, 'Going to Market at Qingming Festival' (Qingming Shang He Tu). This scroll shows preparations for a feast day in Kaifeng city in Henan Province during the Northern Song Dynasty.

3 Viewing Gallery Just as at Mai Po, this gallery provides the best view of the marshes from the Visitors' Centre. Luckily, we didn't have to contend with weekend crowds, so my friend and I had plenty of time and opportunity to use a telescope to zoom in on different parts of the marshland. In addition, CCTV monitors and bird identification guides allow visitors to 'virtually' explore the beauty of bird life in the park.

4 Wetland Challenge In this gallery, we were taken on a tour along a virtual 'river'. As we 'floated' along, we learned about human activities that threaten wetlands. All the terms I learnt as a student flooded my mind: lumber milling, acid rain, over-hunting and so on.



Hong Kong Wetland Park

Add: Wetland Park Road, Tin Shui Wai, NT, Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 2708 8885

Fax: (852) 3152 2668 (General Enquiries), (852) 2617 4230 (Ticketing)

Opening hours: 10:00 – 17:00 (closed on Tuesdays, public holidays, and the first two days of Chinese new year)

Admission: HK\$30 (adult), HK\$15 (children), free (children under age of 3)

Website: www.wetlandpark.com



Macau

In-and-Out of Macau's Fisherman's Wharf

A rendezvous of entertainment spots, shops, eateries, casinos and five-star accommodations, Fisherman's Wharf is just five minutes' walk from the Macau Ferry Terminal. Come explore the new Macau!



Best Buys

As you enter the district, you'll see a promenade of souvenir shops and restaurants between the Convention & Exhibition Centre and Legend Wharf. With the opening of the Babylon Casino and Rock's Hotel, you could actually spend all your time at Fisherman's Wharf.

Website:

www.fishermanswharf.com.mo

1. The Fisherman's Wharf reflects a taste of ancient Europe. (by Joseph Ma)

2 & 3. Beautiful souvenirs of Portuguese style. (by Mickey Ching)

4. The path of the 'Potala Palace'.

5. The Roman Amphitheatre.

6. European mansions built along the Legend Wharf.

7 & 8. Slot machines and alarm clocks for souvenirs.

9. The Wharf is a perfect place to chat and dine with families or friends at night.



A Taste of Portugal

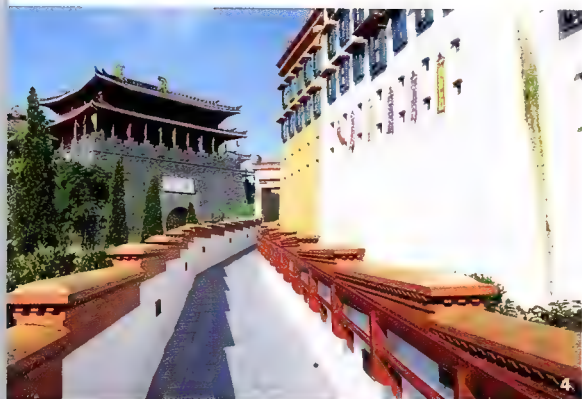
As its name implies, the shop carries gifts and souvenirs with a Portuguese flavour. Some kitchenware items have been imported directly from Portugal. Colourful decorative magnets depict Portuguese designs, and since each of them is backed with cypresswood, they can also be used as trivets. Lovely, wood-framed indigo relief drawings of some of Macau's historic structures are also on offer.



Add: Shop 1, Lisbon-Portalegre

Tel: (853) 725 360

Business hours: 11:00 ~ 22:00



Attractions

Covering more than 111,500 square metres, Fisherman's Wharf supplies countless touristy photo opportunities.

Potala Palace The miniature version of the real one in Lhasa is in fact the entrance to Vulcania where you may hop on 'Dragon Quest', Asia's first indoor roller coaster, and the 'River of Fire' water ride. The path alongside the 'palace' leads to a viewing terrace at the top, where you can have a panoramic view of the Fisherman's Wharf tourist area.

Roman Amphitheatre Located in the East Meets West area, the 'coliseum' covers 3,500 square metres and is a multi-functional venue where tourists can watch professional audio & visual programmes.

Legend Wharf Just past the spectacular Constantine gate, Legend Wharf is a neighbourhood of traditional European-style buildings. Late in the year, artificial snow is used to create a Western winter's day.

Exciting Stunt Show

The Jet Ski Show is a breathtaking stunt performance that takes place at Fisherman's Wharf every day. Skilful performers can turn the jet in the air and land vertically on the water. Even if you are sat towards the back, the big, splashy waves created by the performers' tricks will make you feel as if you are in the water.

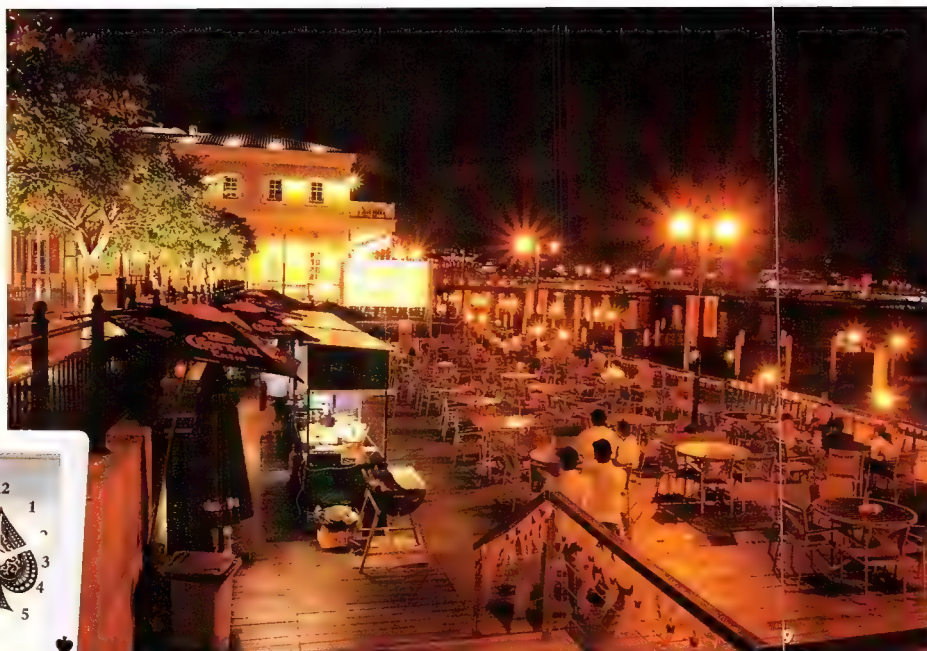
Venue of show & ticketing: Water World Ground

Show time: 15:00, 16:00, 18:00, 20:00

Ticket: MOP\$50

Cuisine Promenade

After sampling all the games and shows, it's time to feast on some appetizing cuisine. The promenade has something for everyone, from English fish & chips to Japanese sushi. It's pleasant to sit on the Fisherman Terrace or Tulip Terrace and chat with friends late into the night.



Fantastic Macau

Gambling isn't just about money. It can be fun, too! This shop sells kitschy alarm clocks and ashtrays designed to look like poker cards. Other items have been inspired by betting chips and dice. But the children's favourite will be the mini-slot machines.



Add: Shop 1, Rome
Tel: (853) 725 350
Business hours: 11:00 ~ 22:00



Macau

Macau's Lan Kwai Fong

Leaving Fisherman's Wharf and walking towards the Avenida Dr Sun Yat Sen, leads you to Macau's newest attraction — the **Lan Kwai Fong** along the Outer Harbour waterfront. Cuisines from Portugal, Japan, Korea, Thailand and mainland China can all be tasted here. The parade of restaurants, bars, cafes, jazz clubs and casinos is open all hours. No wonder the place has earned the title of **Macau's Lan Kwai Fong**.



A



B



C



D

1. Superb Roasted Pigeon Marinated.
2. Seafood Rice in Portuguese style (MOPS80).
3. Boiled Rice in Stone Pot (MOPS120).
4. Raw Beef with sliced Pear (MOPS130).
5. Fruit tea served in Mickey tea set (MOPS24).
6. Rose and Chrysanthemum Tea (MOPS32).

Restaurante Fat Siu Lau 2 A

Old Meets New

If you've been to the old Fat Siu Lau on 64 Rua da Felicidade, you may know the history of this landmark restaurant. Fat Siu Lau 2, which serves the same delicious Portuguese dishes, sports a trendy décor that's a nice surprise for young diners.

According to the manager, Fat Siu Lau 2 hopes to reflect a modern, more fashionable image. Red dominates the restaurant's colour scheme, even in the chandeliers that hang throughout the establishment like flaming blossoms. Mirrors have been used to cleverly create a sense of space. Green curtains imported from Britain provide a stylish contrast to the overall red theme, complemented by the tones of a French chanson playing over the stereo system. In their

second venture, these respected restaurateurs have successfully updated their image while continuing to offer their traditional cuisine.

As for food, the Superb Marinated Roast Pigeon is still the best dish. However, the remaining options appeal as well, including Portuguese-style Stewed Seafood and Rice or the delicious Coffee Soufflé dessert. Call ahead to book a window seat for a view of the Kun Lam Statue along the shore of Av. Dr Sun Yat Sen!

Restaurante Fat Siu Lau 2 佛笑樓2

Add: Avn Dr Sun Yat Sen, 1435 Edif. Vista Magnifica Court, R/C (F/G/H), Macau

Tel: (853) 722 922 Business hours: 12:00 ~ 15:00; 18:30 ~ 24:00

Transport: Bus no. 8, 12, 17, AP1 Website: www.fatsiulau.com.mo



Goong Korean Restaurant B

Korean Craze

Korean TV and movies are hot in Hong Kong, and the culture has also caught the passion of the Macanese. The Goong Korean Restaurant is one of the best choices for an authentic Korean feast. Opened by Korean Sonya Osugi, the restaurant is nicely designed; traditional Korean tiles decorate the entrance, while ubiquitous blue and red Korean taichi symbols have been painted on the glass doors. Every aspect of the décor — the huge drum, masks, hanging ornaments and wooden screen — all reflect pride in the Korean nationality.

Sonya is adamant about offering quality

Korean dishes to her guests. Take the pork rolled in spicy pickle; both the vegetables and pork are fresh and juicy. To eat, roll it up with a piece of sesame leaf imported from South Korea. The Kalbi (Korean BBQ) is another highlight with a wide range of ingredients to choose from — fresh seafood, ribs and shrimp, among others. My favourite winter dish is the colourful boiled rice in a stone pot.

Goong Korean Restaurant 宮韓國餐廳

Add: Rua de Berlin 112 'K' EDF. Centro Tai Fung Commercial Plaza, Macau

Tel: (853) 753 557 Business hours: 18:00 ~ 23:00

Transport: Bus no. 8, 12, 17, or AP1

Leisure Time

Mickey Mouse World

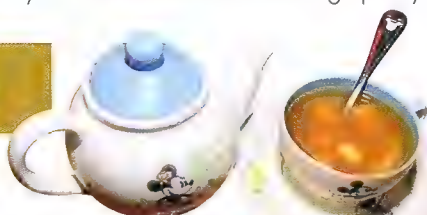
Mr Chau's Mickey Mouse addiction is apparent in his restaurant. The entire café is 'occupied' by the famous rodent, who appears on tablecloths, tableware, tea sets, hanging ornaments, etc. Even the entrance and ceiling are decorated by light bulbs placed to outline the recognizable head and ears. Mr Chau's collection comes from all over the world. While you contemplate his obsession, don't forget to order some mouth-watering fruit tea and thick toast with four flavours of jam to choose from.

Leisure Time 忙裡偷閒

Add: 1293 J shop Li King Court, Seaside Garden, Sun Yat Sin Avenue, Macau

Tel: (853) 753 375 Business hours: 18:00 ~ 02:00

Transport: Bus no. 8, 12, 17, or AP1



Checkers Café D

Private Corner

If you are looking for a quiet place to chat freely with close friends, Checkers Café is the perfect choice with its warm, low lights and soothing music. Relax on the sofa and enjoy delicate Taiwanese snacks and fragrant floral tea. The café stays open until 3am on Saturdays and Sundays.

格子咖啡

Add: Avenida Governador J. Silverio Marques No. 352, RC - AGRC, Edif. Jardim 'Nam Ngon', Macau

Tel: (853) 755 148 Business hours: 13:00 ~ 03:00

Transport: Bus no. 8, 12, 17, or AP1

Macau

A Taste of Myanmar at Three Lamps

Macau truly is a diner's paradise, for here you may feast on cuisines from all around the world. Rotunda de Carlos da Maia (which the locals call 'Three Lamps') is the hub for several Southeast Asian restaurants, particularly Myanmar cuisine, because the area is home to many expatriate Myanmar Chinese.



1. Three Lamps is a hub for expatriate Myanmar Chinese.
2. 'Noodles cooked with Curry Chicken and Coconut Sauce'.
3. 'Rice Noodles cooked in Fresh Fish Soup' (MOPS12).
4. The restaurant owner cooks 'Myanmar Egg Mixed Noodles' for me (MOPS11).
5. House dish - 'Rice Noodles cooked with Pig Brain, Pork Tripe and Liver'.
6. The son of the restaurant's owner loves 'Falouda' (MOPS10.5).
7. Cheap and cheerful 'Buttered Rice' (MOPS10).

Nga Heng Myanmar

Top Myanmar Restaurant

Of all the Myanmar restaurants in the Three Lamps area, Nga Heng is the most well-known among locals. Inside, the walls of this tiny restaurant are covered in clippings of newspaper and magazine reviews. It has even attracted movie stars from Hong Kong.

All of the dishes on its rich menu are reasonably priced - even the house dish is just over MOP\$20. My first recommendation is 'Noodles cooked with Curry Chicken and Coconut Sauce'. An authentic Myanmar dish, the fragrant noodles taste smooth and spicy, but

the 'Rice Noodles cooked in Fresh Fish Soup' is my favourite. The bone of the fish is first taken out and the tender flesh is marinated with sliced ginger and red chilli before stir-frying. Tasty banana heart and broad bean cakes are a perfect match with this dish.

Nga Heng Myanmar Restaurant 雅馨緬甸餐廳

Add: G/F, 27 Rua de Fénix, Macau

Tel: (853) 528 129 Business hours: 08:00 ~ 19:30

Transport: Bus no. 12 (gets off at Bank of China stop on Avenida da Horta e Costa)



3

Toung King Chinese Noodle House

Pig Brain Dishes

Although the Chinese name of this restaurant is '東京', which translates as Tokyo, it has no relationship with Japan. The only one of its kind in Macau, the restaurant specializes in pig brain dishes. Mr Wong, its owner, is an expatriate Chinese from Myanmar.

At his recommendation, I ordered the house dish — 'Noodles Mixed with Pig Brain, Pork Tripe and Liver'.

If you think you don't have the 'guts' to try it, bear in mind that the ingredients are delivered fresh everyday and cleaned several times before cooking. You are what you eat, and the Chinese believe pig brain

is especially nutritious for our brains! Seasoned with sliced onion and chilli, this noodle dish is really delicious. But if you don't have a 'mind' for pig organs, consider ordering the 'Egg noodles stir-fried with Chilli Oil, Shelled Fresh Shrimp, and Shrimp Paste' — another celebrated specialty of the house. Mr Wong personally makes the restaurant's special shrimp paste (which includes minced mushrooms, sesame, shrimp, red chilli, red onion, ginger, spring onion, sugar, pepper powder and oil). Again, each dish is affordable, costing no more than MOP\$50!

Toung King Chinese Noodle House 東京小食館

Add: No. 1 C Rotunda Carlos da Maia, Macau

Tel: (853) 560 037 Business hours: 14:30 ~ 01:00

Transport: Bus no. 12 (gets off at Bank of China stop)



4



5

Sec Chan Ti Noodles & Café House

Unique Buttered Rice

There are many older Myanmar restaurants in Three Lamps, but don't miss Sec Chan Ti. It also serves authentic Myanmar dishes, including the most common noodles cooked with chicken and coconut sauce. However, it is most famous for its 'Buttered Rice', which you won't find anywhere else in Macau. The so-called 'buttered rice' is in fact yellowish glutinous rice (sticky rice). It is first cooked and then mixed with other ingredients such as Myanmar beans, deep-fried sliced ginger and Chinese onion, or sesame, to name a few. I like both its cheerful colour and rich taste. 'Datuk Mixed Noodles' are another good choice. The dish, a mixture of chicken, green

bean noodles, and coconut and lemon juices, tastes sweet, sour, and salty all at once. Not to be missed is the special drink 'Falouda' made with Myanmar green bean powder, green bean pudding, glutinous rice dice, raisins, milk and an ice-cream ball. Sec Chan Ti was a perfect stop on my dining tour in Macau.

Sec Chan Ti Noodles & Café House 食真D緬甸咖啡室

Add: G/F, 45 Gungang St, Macau (close to Rua de Fénix Mendes Pinto)

Tel: (853) 215 720 Business hours: 07:00 ~ 18:00

Transport: Bus no. 12 (gets off at Bank of China stop)



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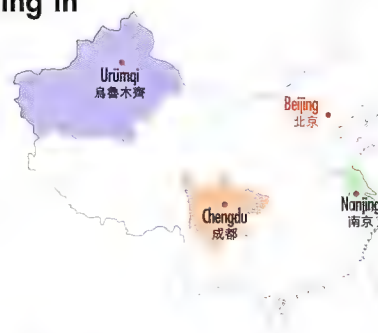


7



A Tale of Three Cities

How have Chinese cities modernized in recent years? We invite you to look at three different capital cities in China: Chengdu in Sichuan, Nanjing in Zhejiang, and Urumqi in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.



The Chunxi Road at night is as bright as daytime when all the lights are turned on. It is a prosperous shopping area in Chengdu. (by Ju Hong)



A glance at a street in Chengdu. (by Peng Mingshang)



Chengdu — City of Beauties and Happiness

Photos • Ju Hang, Suzan So et al Article • Suzan So

In an Internet poll, Chengdu has been voted as one of the six 'laziest' cities in China, ranking only next to Lijiang and Lhasa that respectively take the first two places. Wanting to know what defines 'laziness' I visited Chengdu in Sichuan Province.

A Visit to Chunxi Road

At night, I arrived at the Shuangliu Airport and the first thing I did was to watch the Chengdu-born female tour guide carefully because I was also told that Chengdu is renowned for beautiful women. I noticed that her skin was snowy and dainty and her poses were elegant. She said that all the Chengdu girls are conscious about their looks and always try to avoid

the direct sunlight and stay under the shadow.

We followed her to Chunxi Road which is the famous shopping street in Chengdu and includes many large department stores such as the Pacific, Wangfujing, Ito Yokodo and Parkson Shopping Centre and the well-known specialty shops from mainland including Baleno, Yishion and Jeanwest.

Not long ago, a fashion magazine in the

mainland sponsored a Chinese beauty contest here, in which the girls of Chengdu topped the competition against their rivals from the four most competitive cities Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chongqing, and collected the title for Chengdu as the 'First City of Beauties' in China. According to statistics, Chengdu people spend about 70% of their salary on average on shopping and entertainment. They have a magnetic attraction to the big labels, and interestingly those spelled in unknown foreign languages are most sought after.

That evening, I also returned to the hotel fully loaded with my new clothes purchased along Chunxi Road.

Jinli, a Passage into History

The next day I decided to explore Chengdu on my own to fully experience the relaxing life in the town and search for the elusive laziness.

Recommendations by both the tour guide and a local taxi driver saw me heading for Jinli, which means 'magnificent lane' in English. The 350-metre long Jinli Street we see nowadays is actually a mini replica of the original Jinli district, one of the most prosperous zones in the old Sichuan. Formally opened to visitors in November 2004, Jinli has free entry and it is built in the style of the Ming and Qing dynasties. It contains tea-houses, hostels, pubs, Chinese opera stages and even civil residences.

Jinli consists of many snack and tea-house areas. It is well known that Chengdu people like to play with mahjong and spend hours chatting, but the tea-houses in Jinli impress visitors with a feeling of easiness and tranquility. Within sight of my table were several students of fine arts drawing sketches of a lotus pool and other young people sitting around a table in two and threes reading or napping. I found that leisure was closer to what I desired. Similarly, like Lijiang and many tourist areas in China red lanterns will be hung high here at night.

In the past I was always wary of the hot Sichuan dishes. As soon as I saw their red colour, my tongue would begin to feel numb. In the snack area in Jinli however, I dared myself to taste the peppery food such as 'bang bang ji' (steamed shredded chicken in chilli sauce) and 'liangban qiaomian' (cooled buckwheat noodles mixed with a variety of seasoning). To my surprise, I thought they were delicious!

Bookshop to Linger For

Carrying on my walk, I went to a bookshop recommended by a friend called 37° Bar which is situated in the campus of the Sichuan University.

According to its superintendent Mr Ma Tianshu, the '37°' implies the temperature of a human heart. Thanks to its favourable location, the bookshop has attracted many university students and become one of the ideal meeting sites for young people.

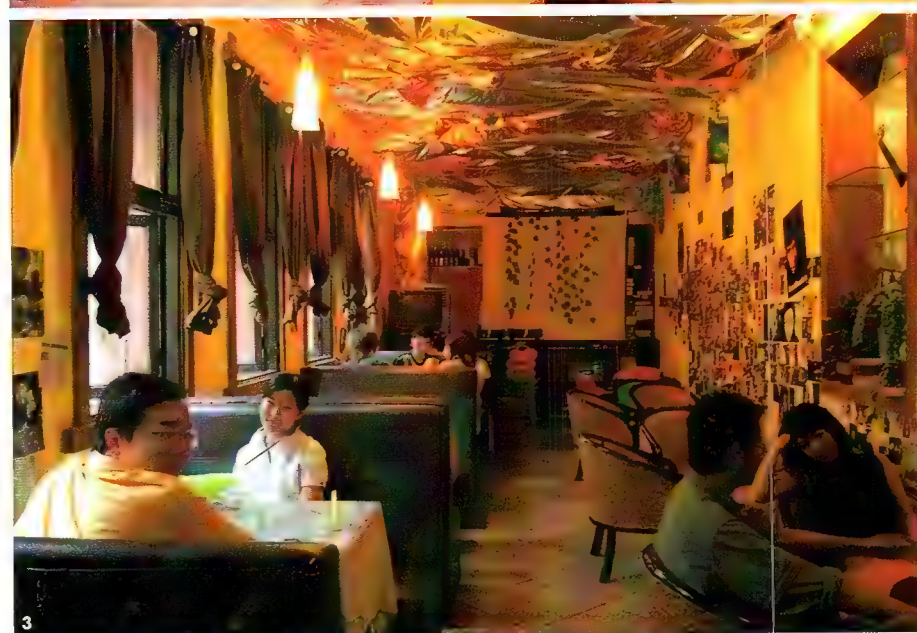
Mr Ma explained that although Chengdu people were busy they would grasp every leisure moment to enjoy life in a tea-house. He added that Chengdu people are fond of entertainment and enjoyment. They are even willing to drive two or three hours to a destination for a bowl of desirable noodles, then drive back to home for another two to three hours. How tiring yet romantic!

The bookshop is divided into two sections; one is

1. Chengdu is renowned for its beautiful women and gives it the reputation of 'City of Beauties'. (by Yang Yankang)

2. Promotional catwalk shows in shopping malls have become a trend in Chengdu. (by Su Ke)

3. The 37° Bar is a popular gathering place in the city. (by Suzan So)





for chatting and the other for reading. Guests will be surrounded by light music and a cosy atmosphere. Xiao Bing is in charge of the bar in the bookshop. As a music lover, he invites friends of the same tastes to hold concerts here from time to time. In addition, the bookshop also hosts other activities such as mini photo exhibits, fund donation and movie or drama performances.

Stunning Sichuan Opera

The place where I watched an authentic Sichuan opera is a tea-house named Shu Feng Ya Yun (蜀風雅韻). Since this was the first time for me to see Sichuan opera and 'bian lian' (mask-changing, a characteristic performance of Sichuan opera). I arrived 20 minutes early. The tea-house is located inside the tranquil Cultural Park and from the many tourist buses parked in front of it; I was convinced I would be watching a good show.

No sooner had I sat down than a tea waiter



with a copper pot in his hand was ready to perform his stunt before me. He turned his waist and then bent his legs slightly, then poured boiling water through the long spigot exactly into a tea cup and the faint fragrant smell of jasmine began to suffuse around me.

The vast area was fully covered with many tidily arranged bamboo chairs. Looking around I also saw many western tourists who were obviously fond of and curious about traditional Chinese culture and arts. The performance began at 8pm on time and a wonderful show followed including the Sichuan opera, a solo performance of traditional hugin music, puppet show, hand-shadow play, 'bian lian', flame-throwers and so forth... I felt so moved and was reminded of the poignant scene in *Pretty Woman* when Julia Roberts first watches an opera and finds herself crying for its beauty.

My time in Chengdu passed quickly as the speed of a mask changing. Before I left I read from a local newspaper that Chengdu was voted as 'the happiest city in China', I completely second it.

Translated by Huang Deyuan

1. The mask-changing show is a thrilling yet mysterious performance. As a first time watcher I could hardly hide my excitement. (by Suzan So)

2. Wedding ceremonies are becoming more and more lavish and luxurious cars are a necessary part. (by Xie Guanghui)

3. Stepping in to Jinli is to go back in time. It is a good place to cherish the past. (by Suzan So)

Travel Tips

Transport:

From airport to downtown: It costs 10 yuan and takes about half an hour by airport bus, the downtown station is located at the Civil Aviation Booking Office (beside the Minshan Hotel); it costs only 10 yuan or less if several passengers are collected to take one taxi, but it might take longer time whilst the driver waits for more passengers.

Buses: Both double and single-decked buses charge 1 yuan for one passenger seat; a luxurious bus 2 yuan and one more RMB is charged after 10 o'clock at night.

Taxi: The flag fall price is 5 yuan for the first 3 km and 1.4 yuan for one more kilometre from 07:00 to 22:00; the minimum price is 6 yuan for the first three kilometres and 1.7 yuan for one more kilometre from 22:00 to 07:00.

Tricycles: All the tricycles have been licensed with ID numbers, and all the riders bear their employee cards. The minimum price is 5 yuan; always discuss and confirm the prices prior to the journey lest any disagreement arise.

Tourist Attractions:

37° Bookshop

Add: Behind Building A of Basic Teaching, Wangjiang Campus, Sichuan University

Transport: Accessible by buses No. 19 and No. 35.

Tel: (28) 8966 5606

Shu Feng Ya Yun

Add: Cultural Park, Qintai Road Transport: Bus No. 302.

Tel: (28) 8776 4530

Show time: 20:30 ~ 21:30 daily Price: 120 yuan per person

Website: www.shufengyayun.com

Accommodation:

1. Sichuan Jinjiang Hotel *****

Situated at the Renmin Road South, a major street in Chengdu, it is near the famous Funan River, opposite to the Tianfu Square in the distance. A standard room is priced 750 yuan.

Add: No. 80, Section 2, Renmin Road South, Chengdu

Tel: (28) 8558 2222

Website: www.chengdujinjianghotel.com

2. Sichuan Minshan Hotel ****

Merely 5 minutes' walk away from the Tianfu Square, the heart of the city, it is cheaper than other hotels of the same standard. There are shuttle buses to the airport in front of the hotel. It charges 358 yuan for a standard business room.

Add: No. 55, Section 2, Renmin South Road, Chengdu

Tel: (28) 8558 3333 Website: www.minshan.com.cn

3. Traffic Hotel

Located at 6 Linjiang Road Central, Xin Nan Men (New South Gate), Chengdu, it is backpackers' favourite. It is next to the Xin Nan Men Bus Station and near to the Minshan Hotel also. A standard room is 120 yuan and a bed in a dormitory is 30 yuan.

Tel: (28) 8545 1017 Website: www.traffichotel.com

Tourist Map of Chengdu Town Centre





Nanjing — Old History, New Look

Photos • Xie Guanghui Article • Zhou Xiaoping

Despite age-old features like the Qinhuai River, the Ming Tomb, the Mausoleum of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the Presidential Palace, and the Yangtze River Bridge, the historical city of Nanjing seems eternally young. It constantly changes with the times, retaining a youthful vigour and following the latest fashions.



Nanjing 1912

Nanjing 1912, a lively business and entertainment district, is a neighbour of the Presidential Palace of the Republic of China (1912—1949). The L-shaped block, covering an area of over 30,000 square metres, comprises more than 20 Republican-style office buildings as well as the Fraternity Plaza, Republic Square, Peace Square and the New Century Plaza now under construction. They partly encircle the formerly heavily guarded Presidential Palace in the west and north.

The Presidential Palace complex, a combination of Chinese and Western architectural styles, has a long history. It was first the residence of Chen Li, an early Ming Dynasty official, some 600 years ago.

Later it served as the home of Prince Zhu Gaoxu, the third son of Ming Emperor Yongle (reign 1403—1424). During the Qing Dynasty (1644—1911), the governor-general of Jiangnan and Jiangxi provinces, who was in charge of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, used it as his offices. By the reign of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (1851—1864, established by Hong Xiuquan and his followers), it was renovated and expanded into a grand palace for Hong Xiuquan using bricks, stones and beams from the Ming Palace. It was also in this building complex that Dr. Sun Yat-sen assumed the office of Interim President of the Republic of China on New Year's Day in 1912, ending a thousand years of feudal rule and

1. On New Year's Day, 1912, Dr. Sun Yat-sen became Interim President of the Republic of China here.

2. The Nanjing Library, a Singaporean designer's modern offering to this ancient city.

3. Young people love shopping along the underground Starlight Avenue at Xinjiekou.

4. The metro is fast and convenient.

ushering in a new republic era.

However, the Presidential Palace does more than simply mark a special period in modern Chinese history. Its architecture and exhibits are worth a closer look. The main structures within the building complex include a classic Western-style portico, a hallway that was once the throne room during the reign of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, an auditorium rebuilt on the Qing Dynasty drawing room, the President's House built when Lin Sen served as the chairman of the Kuomintang Administration, and the famous Lin Xu Garden. Two executive office buildings in service from 1928 ~ 37 in the eastern part of the courtyard have recently been opened to the public. The exhibits also include stables and the dormitory for the military band and the orderlies. Many photos and objects on display illustrate the history of the Ming and Qing eras and the early years of the Republic.

A left turn from the Presidential Palace will lead you to Nanjing 1912. While the architecture here resembles that of the Presidential Palace, this is quite a different world. Some have dubbed it the 'past president's residence, and present city's living room'. White-collar

workers, corporate types, foreigners and tourists dominate the large crowds milling around the area.

Republic Mansion is a small restaurant that specialized in family-style cooking and banquet dishes during the 1920s ~ 30s when its clientele included KMT VIPS. The emphasis is on healthy food here and the ambiance is one that blends 'nostalgia, culture, arts and health'. Several other similar restaurants in the neighbourhood provide the chance to relax with a tasty meal after a long day of shopping or sightseeing.

As pleasant as it is during the day, Nanjing 1912 really comes alive at night. The brilliantly lit restaurants are often crowded with diners. Cantonese, Japanese and Western food are all on offer, while bars and nightclubs do a thriving business. Nanjing 1912 expertly mixes Chinese and Western elements, a style now in vogue.

Zhongshan Golf

Heading east from the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum along Huanling Road will bring you to Zhongshan Golf Course, said to be the best downtown golf course in China. This 18-hole standard link also offers

1. Nanjing 1912 is a business-entertainment complex with bars, cafes, restaurants and discos.

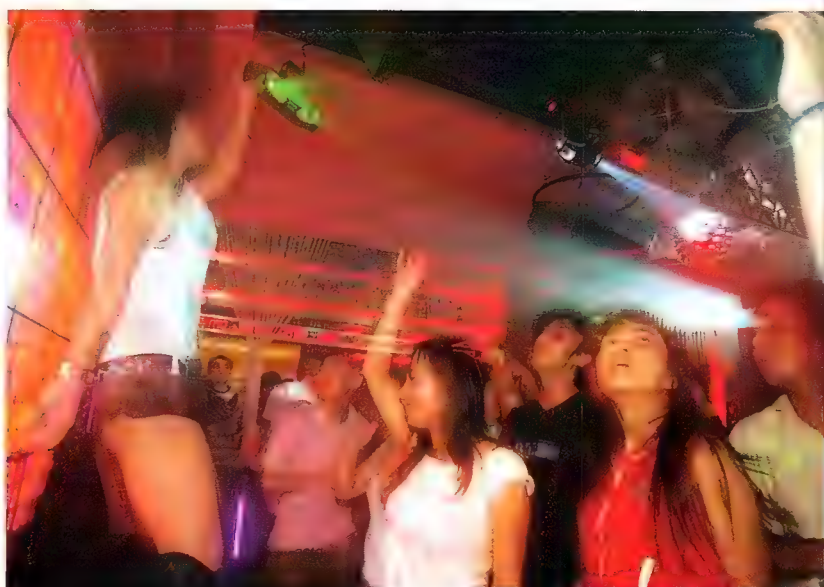
2. Disco fever in full swing.

3. A Nanjing nightclub.

4. Bars at Nanjing 1912.

5. Zhongshan Golf, east of Zhongshan Mountain, is close to downtown Nanjing.

6. The Qinhuai River area has something for everyone, including rickshaw rides along the river.



a nine-hole floodlit training link. The adjacent Sofitel Zhongshan Golf Hotel and golf villas are managed by the French Accor Group. Zhongshan Golf was designed by the world's leading golf course planners, designers and advisors.

There are now 57 golf courses in the East China area, most of them in the countryside some two to three hours' drive from the city. Only three, including Zhongshan Golf, are near city centres. Less than five kilometres from the downtown area, the course is adjacent to the City Ring Express Highway and the Shanghai-Nanjing Express Highway. It is also just a two-hour drive from the surrounding cities of Suzhou, Wuxi, Changzhou, Zhenjiang, Yangzhou, Taizhou, Huai'an, Jiaxing and Huzhou.

Tangshan Hot Springs

Nowadays many Shanghai travellers often bypass downtown Nanjing completely in their haste to get to the Tangshan hot springs.

The Tangshan hot springs have a long history, discovered as they were on the east side of Tangshan Hill more than 2,000 years ago. According to



legend, in ancient times there were 10 suns that took turns appearing in the sky. Tiring of this routine, they decided to come out all at once, but it became so hot that the rocks melted, people died and plants withered. So the Lord of Heaven sent an archer, Houyi, to frighten the suns. Houyi climbed Shewu Hill and shot nine of the suns out of the sky with his magic bow and arrows. One of the suns fell down into the



belly of Tangshan Hill, and since then hot spring water has flowed out of the hillside. Commentary on the Waterway Classic (*Shui Jing Zhu* 水經註), written 1,500 years ago, describes the Tangshan hot springs as being 'crystal-clear and hot all year round. Frequent bathing can not only help improve the skin but also prolong life'. At that time, according to the record, many aristocrats, officials and literati came to bathe here, and many disabled people who arrived walking with crutches were said to have left cured of their ailments. During the Southern Dynasties (420—589), after an empress dowager had her skin disease cured by bathing in the hot spring, the emperor was so impressed that he ordered the construction of a temple in Tangshan. In its heyday, Tangshan had more than 100 bathing pools of varying size. During the Republic period (1912—1949), many KMT VIPs built villas at Tangshan.

Research shows that the Tangshan hot springs are between 200 ~ 500 million-years-old. During the Upper Jurassic (about 155 million years ago), several major tectonic movements caused the formation of a fault. Rainfall then seeped underground and was subjected to geothermal heating, causing the water temperature to gradually rise to an average of 65 ~ 67°C. In the meantime, the water absorbed many mineral elements from various geological layers, including sulphate, calcium, magnesium, strontium and radon, which are all beneficial in treating hypertension, arthritis and rheumatism.

The Yishang Hot Springs Resort combines the

healthful elements of the hot springs with traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), beauty treatments, spa treatments and dietotherapy (using foods and nutrients along with TCM to protect health and prevent disease). For instance, springs are infused with rose, aloe, lavender and other plant extracts for certain skin treatments or with glossy ganoderma (a kind of fungus), ginseng, eucommia bark and Chinese angelica to improve fitness.

Part of Yishang's attraction is its natural setting. Several dozen open-air springs of varying size are scattered over a 10,000-square metre area. Visitors can relax in the steamy waters on a snowy day or under a starry sky on a summer's evening. Meanwhile, the recreational water park at Tangshan provides swimming pools, water slides and other facilities for guests of all ages, including a 20 ~ 30°C hot spring in which you can bathe with tiny fish.

Qinhuai Scenic Area

The Qinhuai River originates from the Baohua and Dongpin hills in the suburbs of Nanjing City. For centuries, from the time the city was established 2,500 years ago, this section of the river had been a noted urban business district. The area has changed much over time, but its fame and charm live on in the Confucius Temple and many other cultural relics. Today's Qinhuai River has been described as a 'budding beauty'. The water quality and environment are improving, and its vibrant nightlife attracts visitors in increasing numbers.

1. Relaxing in a hot spring bath.

2. This indoor pool provides bar service to bathers. Massages are also available.

3. Delightful scenery and delicious local specialties are on offer at the riverside Qinhuai Home restaurant.



The greatest changes have occurred along the five-kilometre section of the riverside from Dongshuiguan, where the river flows into the old city district, to Xishuiguan, where the river runs out of town. The more than 30 scenic spots and historical blocks along this route include the well-preserved Dongshuiguan ruins, the residence of Shen Wanshan and the refurbished Egret Islet Park. Tourists can enjoy the riverside attractions by taking a gaily painted pleasure boat from Dongshuiguan while listening to stirring music played on stringed instruments.

Local food and crafts are another reason to visit the area. Dashiba Street on the south bank of the river was a red-light district in the past, but is now an avenue of restaurants serving up 16 different Qinhuai delicacies.

Qinhuai is also noted for its production of colourful lanterns. From the Spring Festival, China's traditional New Year celebration, to the Lantern Festival each year, the lantern displays at the Confucius Temple draw crowds of visitors, and hundreds of policemen are deployed to keep order. The area around the Qinhuai River is not only tourist-friendly but a nice place to live. Many Chinese like the atmosphere here so much that they have settled next to the river.

Translated by Chen Qiuping



Travel Tips

Transport to Tourist Sites

Nanjing 1912: The district, located just north of Zhongshan Road East and east of Taiping Road North in downtown Nanjing, can be reached by tourist buses No. 1 or 2, or public buses No. 29, 31 or 44.

Nanjing Zhongshan International Golf Course: Situated to the east of Zhongshan Mountain in the eastern suburbs of Nanjing, the course can be reached by tourist bus No. 5 or the Nanjing-Tangshan special route bus to Qilin Town where you can hire a taxi to the golf course.

Yishang Hot Springs Resort: 8 Wenquan Road, Tangshan Town, 25 km from Nanjing City. Take tourist bus No. 5 or the Nanjing-Tangshan special route bus to Tangshan Town.

Qinhuai Scenic Area: Take tourist buses No. 2 or 4, or public buses No. 1, 2, 31 or 35.

Accommodation

1. Zhongshanling International Youth Hostel

This 20-room, European-style country inn provides fishing facilities. Standard rooms are about 200 yuan/room.

Tel: (25) 8444 6688 Add: 7 Shixiang Rd, Nanjing

Jin's Inn

This chain of hotels run by the Jingling Hotel has seven branches in Nanjing at Xinjiekou, Yunnan Road, Sajiawan, etc. Standard room rate (including breakfast) is under 200 yuan.

Tel: (25) 8472 2888 Website: www.jinsinn.com/en/index.asp

Tourist Map of Nanjing Town Centre

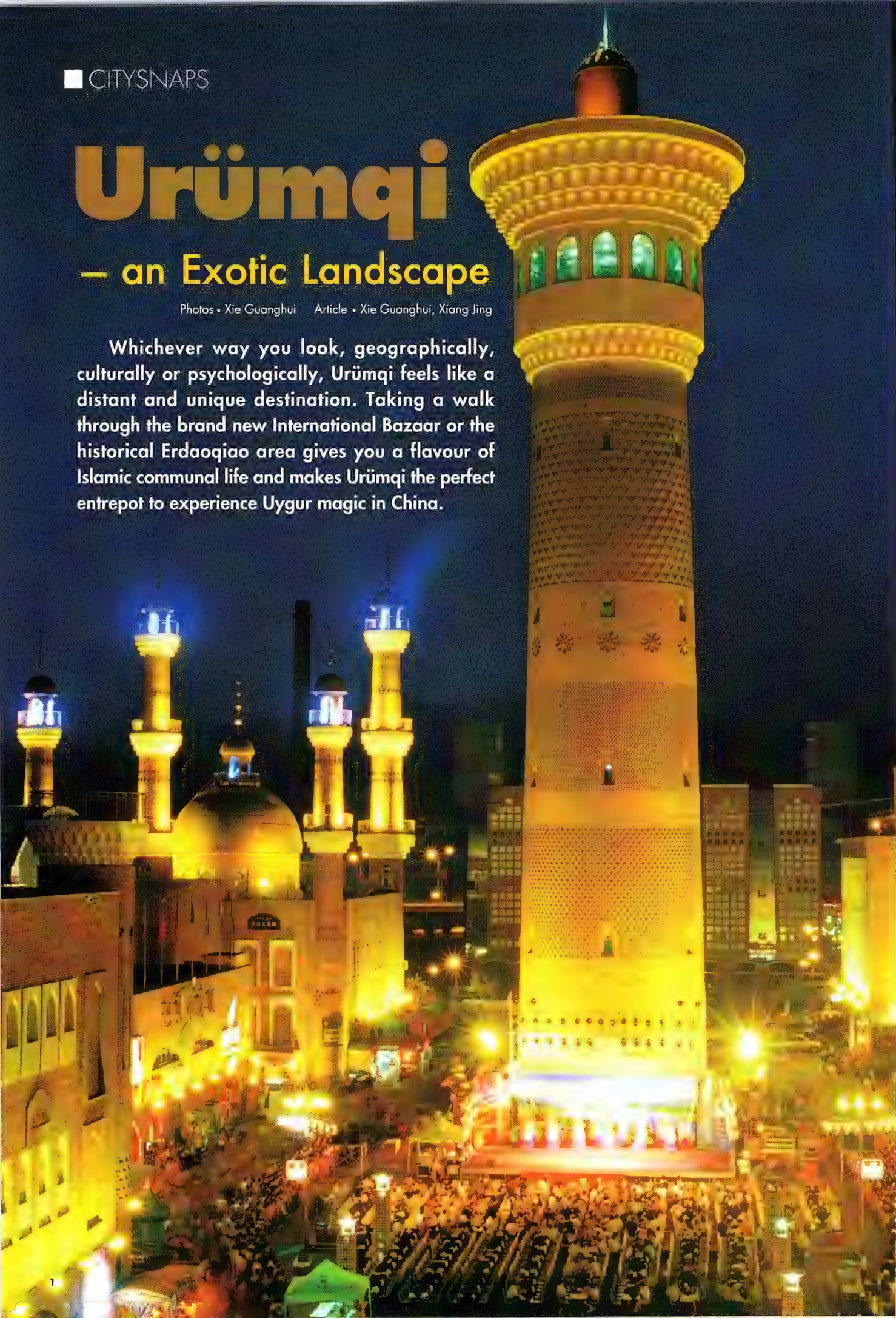


Urümqi

— an Exotic Landscape

Photos • Xie Guanghui Article • Xie Guanghui, Xiang Jing

Whichever way you look, geographically, culturally or psychologically, Urümqi feels like a distant and unique destination. Taking a walk through the brand new International Bazaar or the historical Erdaoqiao area gives you a flavour of Islamic communal life and makes Urümqi the perfect entrepot to experience Uygur magic in China.



Ürümqi — Land of Linguists

Unlike many Chinese cities, street signs and names of government buildings in Ürümqi are written in two languages, Mandarin and Uygur whilst the local paper, the *Xinjiang Daily* comes in five versions; Han, Uygur, Kazak, Mongolian and Kirgiz languages. The different channels of Xinjiang TV station broadcast in three languages. Schools are usually split into two types, Han and ethnic minority and whilst some children from minority groups attend Han schools as well, they speak standard Putonghua or Mandarin at school they revert back to their mother-tongued language at home. It's no exaggeration to say Ürümqi natives are natural linguists; often people can speak three to five languages! The city is divided by the South Gate or Nanmen. To the north is the bustling commercial district with its concrete jungle and was also the city centre in the past. South of the gate is the exotic Uygur district where you can find Pakistani pop music blaring out from shops, posters of Pakistani film stars on the walls and dark bearded Uygurs dressed in knee-length robes, wearing coloured caps. Occasionally a few traditional Uygur women wearing brown headscarves walk by, seeming to hide from view any joy or sadness. It's enough to arouse curiosity in most. The onion-domed mosques that can be seen beyond the tall poplars are evocative of Islamic culture and civilization.

As early as the start of the 7th century, Prophet Mohammed, the founder of Islam encouraged his disciples to go forth and learn, even if it meant going to China! Around the 8th century, Islam spread in Xinjiang's Kashgar via the Silk Road and some Buddhists led the way in converting to Islam. In 932, the Prince of the Qarakhanid Empire, Satuke accepted Islam and became ruler using his influence to bring Islam to areas like Kashgar and Ye'erqiang. But Buddhism remained a strong influence in the Xinjiang region. It wasn't until the end of the 15th century that Islam became widely popular in Xinjiang. Now there are more than a dozen ethnic groups in Xinjiang who believe in Islam, including Uygur, Kazak, Hui, Kirgiz, Tajik, Tatar, Uzbek, Dongxiang, Salar, Bonan. At present believers in Islam make up about 56.3% of the entire population of Xinjiang.

Mosques That Divide

For a very long time, most Muslims have lived in their own communities around their mosques. Ürümqi's Shanxi alley is a Hui area and Erdaqiao and Nanliang are Uygur, all have their own mosque. Prayers or funerals are held at these mosques, with no interaction or mingling among Muslims of different

national minorities. Even the mosques themselves, aside from displaying Islam design features, are different for the various ethnicities. For example, Uygur, Uzbek and Tatar mosques are mostly Persian in style, with high arched doors and windows and domed ceilings. They possess a spatial layout with structures and drawings and carvings showing a free flowing touch, with bright colours and magnificent designs. The most famous are Ürümqi's Nuoduoyi Mosque and Kashi's Aitiduoni mosque. Hui mosques are much more traditional Chinese in architectural style, most were built after the Ming Dynasty and are usually wooden, large halls, intricately carved windows and doors and painted beams and posts. The interiors are grand and dazzling, not unlike the Confucius temple or the Imperial Palace. Mosques in this style include: Ürümqi's Shanxi Xi Dasi, Xian's Huajue Xiang mosque and Jining's Dong Dasi of Shandong.

Ürümqi means 'beautiful pastures' in Uygur. In 1769 the capital was located in Yili and Ürümqi was

1. Larger than the one in Turkey's Istanbul, the Xinjiang International Bazaar combines shopping, entertainment, food and beverage all under one roof.

2. Women wearing headscarves are often seen in Ürümqi's streets.

3. Uygur babies are often cute and likeable.





1. Devoted Islamic believers pray at mosques everyday.

2. Ürümqi offers a melting pot of foods from different ethnicities, enough to whet any tourist's appetite.

3. The Bazaar is a one stop shop for tourists needs — be it food and drink, entertainment or that special souvenir to take home.

4. Erdaoqiao is the ultimate marketplace in the hearts of the older Ürümqi locals, where the calls of vendors have created a unique clamour for over a century.

a farming centre that controlled the north-south route of the Tianshan mountains, especially the southern part of Xinjiang. In the late Qing Dynasty, Russia supported E Gu-bu's mutiny and sent troops to occupy Yili. In 1884 the Qing Dynasty general Zuo Zongtang led forces to take back Yili, he also applied to the imperial court to have Ürümqi designated as Xinjiang's capital. Thereafter, General Zuo left a large number of troops from Hunan province to farm the land, they became the pioneers in the newly created capital.

Exotic Charms of Erdaoqiao

Of all the places in Ürümqi, the ultimate place to see the charm of the Uygur folk can be found in Erdaoqiao market. This has always been where Uygur residents made their home. The little patterned cap they wear is part of their ethnic identity, no matter what season it is, young or old, man or women, they



are worn by all. The caps differ depending on gender, age, occupation and region — there are Badanmu caps, Qiman Tashkan caps, Kaliyadalibaiké caps and Majiang caps, just to name a few. Uygurs, warm and friendly by nature have a natural affinity with music as well as being smart business people. As soon as you pass by their stores, they call out: 'hi, come over and have a look my friend, why not buy a Bamushi coloured cap for your father or a pretty woollen shawl for your mother, or how about a beautiful Aidelai silk scarf for your sweetheart!'...they may be just the calls for business, but are pleasing to hear nonetheless.

Ürümqi natives' talent for trade is possibly inherited from the days of the Silk Road. Since the Eastern Han Dynasty there have been three ways that the Silk Road has entered Xinjiang, from the north, middle and south. The north route starts in Xian, passes through Hexi-corridor beyond Yumen pass, along the northern ranges of the Tianshan mountains, through Tulufan, Ürümqi, Kuerle, Kashi, over the Pamir and towards the west to reach the eastern banks of the Mediterranean and Rome; this is the main route of the Silk Road. The middle route begins in Loulan, via Kuche, Bachu, Kashi, Pamir to arrive in the Mediterranean. The southern route also starts from Loulan, passes Ruqiang, Qiemo, Yutian, Shache, Pamir, India to Afghanistan. For nearly 2,000 years, Uygurs have been under the commercial influence of the busy trading at the three silk roads convergence. In Ürümqi, those trading in gems, carpets, silks, mixed rice, roast lamb and fruits are almost all Uygurs. Muslims mostly run noodle restaurants and other snack stalls, while the Han natives have cornered the market for selling clothing, appliances and mobile phones.

The Erdaoqiao Xinjiang International Bazaar has become a landmark in Ürümqi. The man who developed the idea of building the bazaar, Li Jianhong first made his fortune from selling mobile

phones at Erdaoqiao market. He founded the Hongjing group in 1993 selling telecommunications and IT equipment. The business grew quickly and he started a collaboration with Motorola which propelled the business forward. Li then started planning the Xinjiang International Bazaar and made many research trips to Turkey's Istanbul Bazaar. In 2003, Hongjing group and Hong Kong's Lande Investments poured in 500 million yuan to build the 100,000 square metre Xinjiang International Bazaar, far exceeding Istanbul's Bazaar which is 9,000 square metres in size, to become the world's largest such bazaar.

Bazaar or Bazha is Uyghur for 'market', but market isn't an apt description, it's too simple, too boring, you have to experience it to know what it's like. As soon as you enter you start a journey of exotic enchantment reflected in the cultures and people that mix together in this place. One of the most eye-catching being the Uyghur girls with bright smiles and bubbly personalities, one can't help but admire their friendly persona. The Bazaar is a veritable treasure trove of Xinjiang specialities. For travellers hooked on health products they can find deer antlers, snow lotus, donkey-hide gelatin and a wide assortment of nuts. Young women love the colourful hand embroidered caps sparkling with sequins and lustrous threads or the soft luxurious Aidelai silk. While few men can resist the Yingji sha knife, so named because they are from the Yingji region. The ones sold at the Bazaar are carved with the Yingji sha name both in Uyghur and Mandarin. These handcrafted knives come in hand-sewn leather sheaths and are a unique souvenir reflecting Xinjiang heritage. In comparison, the machine made knives with chrome finishes and glass handles for all their perfection, seem rather common.

Beyond ornaments and delicacies, music lovers are in for a treat. Uyghurs are not only masters of song and dance but experts at instrument making as well. The Uyghur artisans pour their inspiration and talent into lambskin drums, such as the Du'tar of varying lengths and painstakingly crafted Rewafu. The Xinjiang International Bazaar Banquet Hall has waiters in folk costume to welcome guests and instead of traditional round tables as in other parts of China there are western style long dining tables so guests can enjoy food and wine with a Xinjiang song and dance sure to get one's toes tapping. Many locals love to entertain friends from afar, not just for the food but for the ambiance and promise of a good time. In the peak season the banquet hall is full of revellers. Meanwhile, the 3,000 odd square metres gourmet food court showcases classic cuisines from all over China. However, the most tempting and the best-



1. In the early evening sky, a young man holding a slim balancing pole and wearing no safety belt, walks on a steel tightrope, this is the most exciting and danger filled Dawazi performance at the Ürümqi International Bazaar.

2. Downtown Ürümqi, where shoe-polishers abound.

3. Icy drinks — popular with the locals, are found along Ürümqi streets.

4. International Bazaar's Banquet Hall allows up to 1,000 people to dine at the same time, diners can enjoy traditional Xinjiang music and dance.

selling are still the Xinjiang traditional favourites — roasted lamb, roast skewers, mixed noodles, mixed rice, meat noodles, roasted buns, bone soup. Most of Xinjiang's delicacies revolve around lamb and for a good reason too. Lambs in Xinjiang graze on more alkaline grass so the meat is especially tender and tasty not at all greasy or smelling too strongly of mutton.

Heart Stopping 'Dawazi' Shows

In the early evening sky to the tune of Uyghur folk music, a young man in Uyghur costume holds a thin balancing pole and walks on a steel tightrope without any safety cable. He paces, sits cross-legged, walks with a blindfold, walks with a plate underfoot, leaps and then makes a perfect landing on the tightrope... the stunts get harder and harder. The audience below, a packed crowd of raised heads are in utter concentration and sometimes amazement, occasionally becoming so quiet you can hear a pin drop then erupting in thunderous applause; this is the thrilling Dawazi show at the Bazaar. Dawazi means 'tightrope walking at great height' in Uyghur and it's a

traditional acrobatic performance. In Xinjiang, the most famous performer of all is the 'Airborne Prince' Adili Wusong'er of the Xinjiang Acrobatics Troupe. His tightrope walking stunts are well documented in the World Guinness Book of Records, thus making him a hero in Xinjiang.

Aside from the exciting Dawazi there are also Xinjiang musical performances. The brightly attired Uyghur musicians and dancers kick up their heels onstage while Daolang Mukamu's rich clear voice fills the entire Bazaar with joy. Tourists flock to the Bazaar's streets to try the Xinjiang speciality snacks and take in the sights and sounds of the performances.

While the sky turns a deep blue, the Xinjiang International Bazaar is lit up like a stage and as bright as the day and this almost surreal lighting only enhances the visual effect. The elegant yellow tones of the walls are perfectly married to the dynamic elements of Uyghur architecture with their designs rich in Islamic culture and Uyghur customs and in this recreated scene of bustling business one can almost envisage the earlier days of the Silk Road.

Translated by Cheng Lei





Travel Tips

Transport

By air: There is no direct flight to Ürümqi from Hong Kong. Tourist may fly to Ürümqi from Shenzhen. The flight is approximately 5 hours. Upon arrival at Ürümqi Airport, tourist can take public bus No. 51 to the city centre.

By train: The Ürümqi Railway Station has direct services daily between Ürümqi and many Chinese cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Zhengzhou, Xi'an, Lanzhou, Chengdu, Yumen, Alashankou, Ku'erle, Kuitun, Kashi and Alamutu in Kazakhstan.

Buses and taxis in town: Public buses cost 1 yuan for a single trip. The flag fall price for taxis starts at 6 yuan for the first 3 km and an additional 1.3 yuan per kilometre thereafter.

Accommodation

1. Xinjiang Haide Hotel *****

Located in the heart of Ürümqi, 36 storeys, it faces People's Square and has views of the perennially snow-capped Tianshan (Heavenly Mountains), as well as offering a panoramic view of the city's sights, standard rooms cost 560 yuan.

Add: 1 Dongfeng Road Tel: (991) 232 2828

2. Xinjiang Huiyuan Hotel ***

In the commercial district of Ürümqi, comfortable rooms at a reasonable price, standard rooms cost 250 yuan.

Add: 9 Xinhua Road South Tel: (991) 230 5678

3. Ürümqi Jiatai Reception Centre

Its convenient location makes it a backpackers' haven, buses to Tianchi lake and Erdaoqiao are nearby, free broadband internet available, standard rooms cost 60 yuan.

Add: 108 Beiyi Township, Henan Road East Tel: (991) 785 2885

Recommended Restaurants

1. **Bodun Fast Food:** Decorated with Arabian decor, this restaurant serves Uyghur dishes and is surrounded by plants and fresh flowers and includes folk music. The fare is typical Islam: black tea, minced meat with rice, roasted lamb ribs, roast lamb, lamb kidney, mixed noodles, with a bottle of delicious home-made yoghurt.

Add: Yan'an Road, opposite Dawan local government

2. **Yixiang Milky Teahouse:** A restaurant of Kazak tastes, it's run by herders who hail from the great pastures. Recommended dishes are Xinjiang milk tea, more yoghurt, Xinjiang's authentic rice cooked with minced mutton, carrots and raisins (zhua fan), horse meat and other Kazak delicacies.

Add: To the south of Nanmen Renmin Theatre.

3. **Bone Soup Shop:** It serves dishes of the Xibe (Sibo) ethnicity of Qapqal County. Bone soup, rice served in soup (pao zhangzi), Xibe pancakes, pickles are all worth trying. The pickles, crunchy and refreshing are a favourite in Xibe cuisine which includes cabbage, celery and radishes pickled in salt.

Add: Jianshe Road, to the north of Renmin Cinema.

Tourist Map of Ürümqi Town Centre





Through the **Eyes of Farmers**

Article • Sun Min (photos courtesy of Greenpeace China)



In October 2004, Greenpeace China organized 'The Road of Rice — An Ecological Agriculture Tour of Yunnan' to promote sustainable agriculture in the region. During the tour, five local rice farmers were given cameras to record aspects of their daily lives. Under the guidance of Geng Yunsheng, a professional photographer from Yunnan, the farmers took many amazing pictures over a year's time, documenting farming village life. Their work was later exhibited to the public.

The five farmer-photographers come from four different areas in Yunnan — Xiping, Honghe, Jinghong and Weixi — and are of the Dai, Hani and Pumi ethnic groups.

World's Highest Rice Field

Pantiange is 31 km from the county seat of Weixi, on the east bank of the Lancang River. A signboard at the roadside announces the area's special distinction: 'Welcome to the highest rice production area in the world'.

High in the mountains, Pantiange is a relatively small basin that can be crossed in half an hour. Here the landscape resembles the bottom of a pan, and the soil is black, proof that it was once a wetland. Villages are scattered around the rim of the basin, at the foot of the mountains. The inhabitants are of the Pumi, Naxi, Lisu and Han ethnic groups. The Pumi are said to have been the earliest settlers here, and their villages sit on the east side of the basin, which enjoys the most sunshine. As other ethnic groups moved here in later years, the settlers gradually reclaimed land from the wetland to accommodate the growing population. Xiong Guizhi says that during her grandfather's lifetime, the Pumi, Naxi and Han residents worked together to dig trenches to drain off water from the low-lying areas. An increasing population needs more land, making these 1,567-*mu* (104.5 hectares) paddy fields even more valuable.

Only Certain Seeds Thrive

Pantiange is 2,500 metres above sea level. Only a kind of black rice, called 'suo' by the local Pumi, can survive in the cold temperatures that occur here. This breed yields poorly — about 200 kg per *mu* — and is resistant to the cold and to water. It also resists fertilizer, chemical fertilizer in particular. The application of fertilizer helps the growth of seedlings but not the ears. 'Suo' is very delicious, giving out an appetizing fragrance when cooked, according to the locals. They eat it with tea if no other dish is available. 'Suo' is not widely grown now. The output generally only meets the needs of the farmers themselves. It fetches 4 yuan per kilo at the market. In recent years, it has become a welcome gift.

Just like the Pumi farmers, who have adjusted to the mountain environment over the past several hundred years, 'suo' has also adapted to the 2,500-metre high conditions. Non-native rice cannot mature at Pantiange. Even the seeds from rice grown at an altitude of 2,100 metres will not produce plump-eared rice if planted at Pantiange. Only the most adaptable breeds of rice can grow to maturity, as long as there are no



heavy snowfalls in March and no cold fronts in August. Currently, Pannong-1 rice, a hybrid developed by local scientists based on the original black rice, is grown there. The highest yield per *mu* is 250 kg at Pantiange. But it does not work at Tacheng at 1,700 metres above sea level.

1. Planting is not easy with a baby on your back, but local women have worked this way for centuries. (by Xiong Guizhi)

2. Pantiange's paddy fields were reclaimed from swampland. Farmers do the ploughing themselves in the deeper water. (by Xiong Guizhi)

3. The famed Tea-Horse Caravan Route passed along this road. (by Xiong Guizhi)





1. The harvest season's golden bounty. (by Li Zikang)

2. Villagers meet for a chat under a tree. (by Li Zikang)

3. Humid air over Mt Ailao creates a magnificent sea of clouds. (by Li Zikang)

Farmer Li enthusiastically shot several dozen rolls of film by mid-October 2005. Many elderly villagers whose children have left to work in cities hire others to work their paddy fields or they rent them out. Li prefers to do his own farming. Having endured starvation in the past, he treasures the land as he does his own life.

On the Terrace

The Honghe (Red River) County is located at the heart of Ailao Mountain, which separates the Hengduan Mountain valley in west Yunnan from the eastern Yunnan Plateau. The warm, humid air currents from the Indian Ocean are blocked by the high mountain, resulting in plentiful precipitation that creates magnificent clouds overhead and nourishes the terraced fields.

No historical or archaeological data is available to prove when the Hani first cultivated the great terraced fields. But their growth and vitality can be attributed to the continuous efforts of generations of the Hani. Rice cultivation is the most complicated and intensive of agricultural pursuits, particularly in mountain areas. Terraced fields require a complex irrigation system and special planting methods, which form an integral part of the Hani culture.

The terraced fields are a wonder of human ingenuity. The Honghe prefectural government is now applying for the fields to be included on the World



Li Zikang

Li Zikang is a Hani farmer who has been cultivating the terraced fields for many years. He is a member of the Honghe Prefectural Government's Cultural Heritage list.

Cultural Heritage list. It can take two to three hours for local villagers to reach the more distant fields before they begin the long, hard hours of work needed. After a harvest, all of the grains and stems of rice are carried back to the homestead by the farmers themselves with the help of horses.





Rice-Growing Expert

Li Mingfu's home is two kilometres from the border post at the intersection leading to the village. Mengsong is inhabited by the Aini, a branch of the Hani ethnic group. Although the village is less than 90 km from Jinghong, the journey there takes more than six hours and requires two bus changes en route.

The name Mengsong, from the Dai language, means 'a small flatland on the high mountain'. Dozens of rice ears hang from the eaves of Li's house. He cultivated them himself and is drying them for use next year as seeds. Li has been a member of the local agricultural scientific research network since the 1970s. He once bought a camera with money earned from selling his vegetables to photograph local plant diseases and pests, which he sent to agricultural specialists, asking for their help. Of the five farmer-photographers, he knows the most about rice and is also the best at land management. In

addition to taking care of his own 8.8 *mu* of paddy fields, 12 *mu* of tea trees and 14 *mu* of walnut trees, he also once contracted to farm an additional 6 *mu* of vegetables over a five-year period. Li never sells his rice because the price is too low. He would rather grind the rice into feed for pigs and chickens.

Formerly Forest, Now Fields

Mengsong (1,577 metres above sea level) falls within the South Asian tropical climate zone. Due to Indian Ocean monsoons, precipitation in the area averages between 1,600 ~ 1,800 mm, with an annual mean temperature of 18°C. Mengsong was once thick with forests. Now only barren mountains remain. Most of the trees are second growth. The tree felling that took place was part of the previous practice of slash-and-burn farming.

Near the village stands a marshland overgrown with weeds. According to Li, it used to be a wetland



1. Working together helps alleviate the daily workload. (by Li Mingfu)

2. Harvested rice is aired in the field and the chaff is fanned away. (by Li Mingfu)

3. Women work hard all year round, but they take a break on 8 May, International Women's Day. Here women compete in a tug-of-war contest. (by Li Mingfu)

covered in shrubs. When you stand on it, it feels soft and thick. If you jump on it, it trembles beneath your feet. The locals call it a 'ghost pond', based on a story about a 'devil' stone that once stood nearby. According to legend, if the stone was cut down, it would re-emerge later. In 1966, a militia officer mobilized local residents to cut the stone into pieces and convert the wetland into a paddy field. The action was acknowledged by the then-township government. The Mengsong villagers were praised for their revolutionary spirit for not fearing the legend. The militia officer was promoted but fell ill and died soon after. The older villagers blamed the curse of the devil stone for his death.

While that story may have been pure coincidence, Li says that if man alters the natural environment too much, nature will punish him in some way. According to Li, the area's water resources have been diminishing and wildlife has disappeared, while plagues of insects have increased. Three serious army worm (a kind of caterpillar) infestations hit Mengsong in the 1980s. At that time, the army worms came in such swarms that they seemed to block out the sky. They covered the roads and ate up all the crops, even after all the villagers had mobilized to fight them.

Lost Farming Traditions

Li Mingfu's generation was the last to experience, and witness the end of, the Aini's traditional farming rites. For an ethnic group without a written language to record its history, the disappearance of a tradition is an irretrievable loss, like the extinction of a species.





3

Land – Means of Livelihood

Ma Meiyan and Bai Yunxian, the two youngest of the five farmer-photographers, are from the same village – Binlangyuan of Gali town, Xinping County, a beautiful Dai village by the Yuanjiang River. In 2001, the village was developed into a scenic spot and a tourism industry based on local history and culture has evolved. But the villagers don't feel they are a part of that.

Ma Meiyan does most of the farming in her family. Her mother, carrying her one-year-old grandson on her back, dries rice in the sun. Her father left the family to find work elsewhere. Her husband works in the mines on the middle shift, which ends at midnight, so he helps her with the farm work in the morning. As I watched the farmers toting their rice, their shirts soaked with sweat, I couldn't help but think of the rice paradox: Much pain, little or no gain. It takes a great effort to grow rice, but it is extremely cheap. Rice supports and sustains two billion Asian people, but it hasn't brought the rice growers corresponding wealth and honour.

Each year Ma Meiyan's family harvests some four tons of rice, most of it for their own use. Only the surplus is sold at the market. In a fairly good year, they might sell about one ton at 1.4 yuan per kilo. Their annual income from rice is about 1,000 yuan. They also raised three pigs, keeping one for the New Year celebration and selling the other two at the market. They earned between 700 ~ 800 yuan for one pig. That, plus their rice sales, was their entire income for the year.

Ma Meiyan

Ma works until sunset. She said, 'We're all afraid during the busy farming season, particularly on rice-harvesting days; we're often exhausted. We grow rice twice a year, so we are seldom idle.' As she shoulders the bulk of her family's workload, hard work is a way of life for her.

Of the following three options, I asked her which she would take, given the chance: growing rice, finding a job in the city or going into business. She chose business but only on the condition that she could keep her land. I then asked her what future she wanted for her son. 'To go to school, to be an educated man,' she replied. 'I'll let him decide his future. It's better to have a job. Having both land and a job is the best.'

'If your land was requisitioned and you were offered 100,000 yuan to build a house in the city and earn a living by other means, would you do it?' I asked her.

'No, I wouldn't. That sum of money would be used up in two years as you would need to buy grain and build a house. Having land means having grain. With grain, you can raise pigs, sell them, and carry on from one year to the next.'

1. The Dai people at Gali observe traditional funeral rites. When someone dies, the whole village helps arrange the funeral. (by Ma Meiyan)

2. The Dai in Yunnan live in the river valley. Fishing and knitting fish nets are the Dai man's daily work. (by Ma Meiyan)

3. Rice farmers have a simple lunch. The work is hard and repetitive, but the scenery is beautiful. (by Ma Meiyan)

4. Every Dai festival is somehow associated with rice. Such festivals provide women with a well-deserved break. (by Ma Meiyan)





Leaving to Make a Living

Born in 1985, Bai Yunxian is even younger than Ma Meiyun. Not yet married, she lives quite a different life from that of her parents. Now she is learning to run a business along with her boyfriend, selling sugarcane in Yuanjiang and vegetables in Tonghai. Her boyfriend praises her as a 'born vegetable saleswoman'. Compared with Ma Meiyun's family, Bai's is better off; they own a 14-inch black-and-white TV set. According to Bai, 'People nowadays should know more than just farming.'

In her view, she and her father, a traditional rice farmer, are from different eras. After transplanting the seedlings, her father sacrifices a piglet to the divine tree, to pray for a bumper harvest. When the rice ears turn yellow, he makes an offering of glutinous rice and sacrifices a large pig to the dragon tree. Once the grain is stored away, he hangs several ears of rice from the top of the granary for the following year. Five to six sacrificial farming rites must be observed throughout the year. He may not fully understand the rites, but they are deeply rooted in his life. But Bai

Yunxian knows little about these traditions.

When her father told me that the glutinous rice was the oldest and most common breed grown by the Dai, I informed him that glutinous rice was also the oldest rice breed cultivated by man. According to him, glutinous rice is the only thing that the Dai can't do without. Although its yield is quite low, he still plants 0.2 ~ 0.3 *mu*, harvesting some 50 kilograms a year, enough for making sticky rice cakes on New Year's Day or other festivals. He said that if he didn't plant the rice, he would have to trade for it with his relatives. Dai people sell rice, but would feel ashamed if they had to buy rice. In the past when no hybrid breed was available, most of the villagers grew old breeds of glutinous rice; it was the staple food for Bai's grandfather's generation. Now with a rapidly growing population and a decreasing per capita share of farmland, the villagers can no longer grow just glutinous rice.

Bai Yunxian listened carefully as her father spoke. She has learned a great deal from spending a year photographing her fellow farmers and understands the purpose of the photo project well. 'Farmers do live a



Bai Yunxian

hard life. I hope I can tell people in cities through my pictures that each grain of rice comes with pain.'

In June 2006, the five farmer-photographers finished their mission and returned to their daily lives. They will continue to pass on the rice-cultivation history and traditions of their ancestors to their offspring. Their hard work has helped feed the world and their rice culture has helped maintain the vulnerable balance among agricultural biodiversity, environmental preservation and food safety.

Translates by Chen Qiuping

1. A child carries eel cages through a rice paddy. (by Bai Yunxian)

2. Counting the day's income, the profit for days and nights of hard work in the vegetable fields. (by Bai Yunxian)

3. Most villagers know the TCM remedy of cupping. (by Bai Yunxian)

4. An elderly woman enjoys herself at a country fair. (by Bai Yunxian)

Postscript

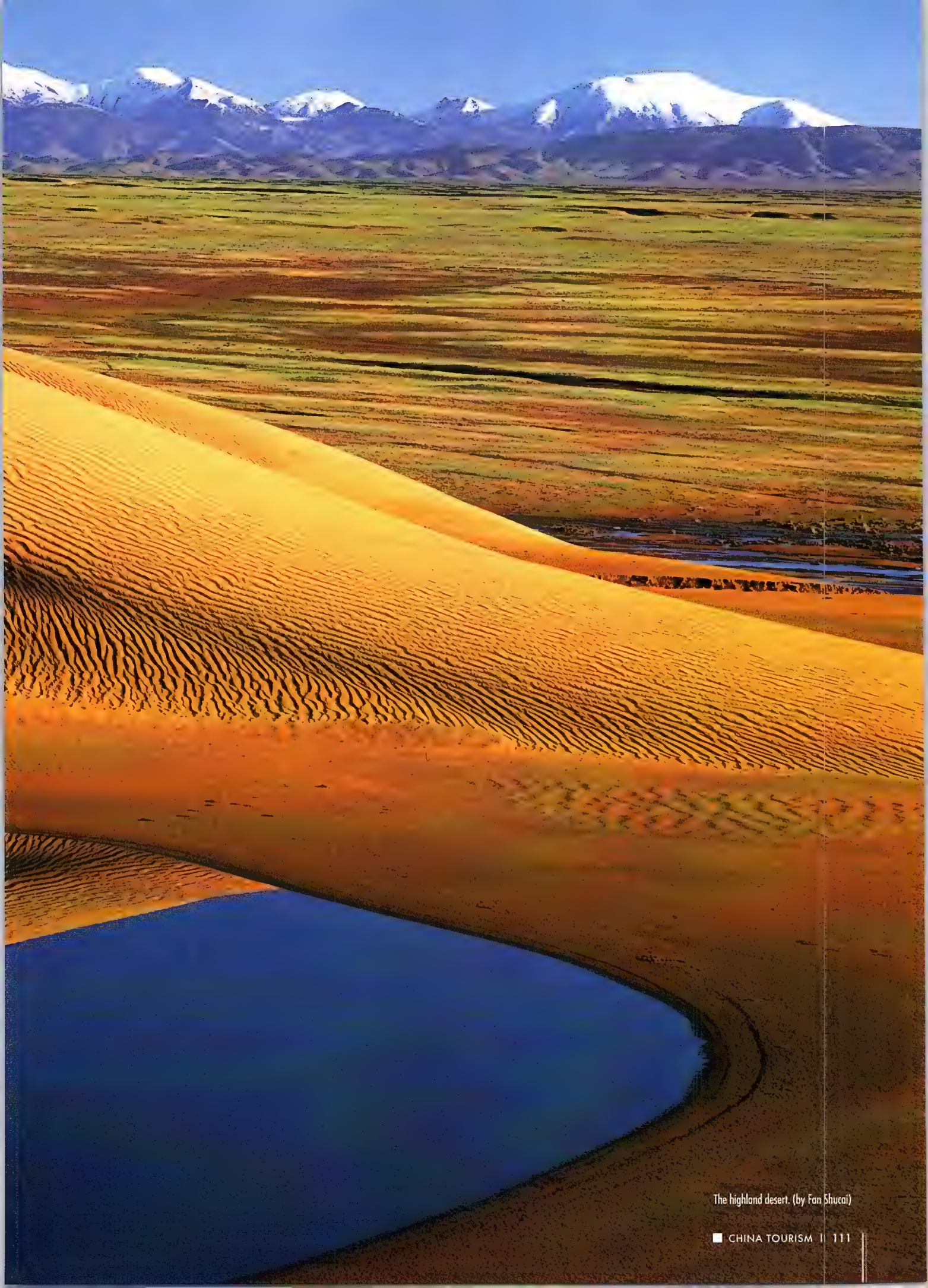
In these five farmer-photographers' hometowns — Gali by a river, Song and Mitian villages on mountainsides, and the high-altitude Pantiang — the people made it clear that 'the land is the only thing in the world we can rely on'. Even the young generation of migrant workers still regard the land and rice as the ultimate hope and support of farmers. Through their lives and photographs, Li Zikang, Li Mingfu, Xiong Guizhi, Ma Meiyun and Bai Yunxian tell us a simple truth: For a country of 1.3 billion people but limited land resources, and for farmers who have worked themselves to exhaustion to feed that population, rice is life.



Third Time to the Altun Mountains

Photo by Guelong, Fan Shao. Article by Guelong

Editor's Note: Due to its secluded location at an average elevation of 4,500 metres in southeast of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the Altun Mountains Nature Reserve boasts many rare types of wild animals and natural landscapes. To capture the four seasons in the Altun Mountains the author travelled there three times between 2005 and 2006.



The highland desert. (by Fan Shucui)



1. The peaks of Muztag. (by Fan Shucai)

2. Skylarks snuggle up together to avoid wind in the early Altun Mountains morning. (by Fan Shucai)

3. Alpine plants abound in the Altun Mountains in July. Shown here is *Umelette Rockjasmine*, or *Androsace umbellata* (Lour.) Merr.. (by Fan Shucai)

31 December, 2005 Qimantage Township

Today is the last day of 2005 but for us it was a rather normal day. In the evening we called home using the satellite telephone to report that everything was going well. This is the way we ushered in the New Year in the cold and solitary winter of the Altun Mountains.

This was our third visit to the Altun Mountains and would also be the last. During the previous two visits we had already overcome many dangerous situations so there was a heavy responsibility on me as the leader of the group to make sure everything went smoothly.

Walking on the icy river

1 Jan, 2006 Govt seat of township ▶ Shazi Spring ▶ Govt seat of township

We rang in the New Year at the Shazi Spring.

On the way to Shazi Spring we saw a great number of yaks and *kiangs* (Tibetan wild donkey) but they were very alert and could feel our presence even from far away. Although we were so quiet and almost stopped breathing, it was impossible for us to take pictures of them still.

In summer it only takes 60 km to go to Shazi Spring but now walking across the frozen river only takes about 10 km. The frozen Shazi River looked like a silver dragon. Since we did not know the river very well so we thought it was better to walk across the river in the sake of safety. Each of us carried about 20 kilograms of photographic equipment.

Walking on the surface of the frozen river we often heard cracking in the ice so to be on the safe side we walked in different routes. We felt much relief when we reached the sand mountain on the other side. Hiking in the



4,000-metre high desert was much harder than we imagined and it seemed that the equipment we carried became heavier and heavier. We got wet with sweat but it was better not to stop walking because the wind was piercingly cold. We walked like this for about seven kilometres. But we were glad that we finally got some pictures of the winter scenery of Shazi Spring.

We had worked about eight hours successively without eating and drinking so we were all tired out after



arriving back in the township. We had a square meal with braised mutton and meat dumplings. To celebrate the New Year's Day we, all men, made the *jiaozi* (meat dumplings) together. With everybody lending a hand the meat dumplings were prepared quickly and disappeared even faster.

2 Jan, 2006 Qimantage Township

This morning I could hardly breathe due to the arrival of a violent windstorm overnight. The wind buffeted us constantly so that walking was more like tottering and one could not stand still for a second. Snow was coming down with the windstorm and the sky became murky and earth dark. The howling of the wind sounded like rows of trucks speeding down the highway. We had lost sight of the high Qimantage Mountain in the north and the elegant Kumukule Desert in the south. The whole world seemed to have lost its colour and I could not help feeling sorrow and loneliness standing there in the open.

Since we could not go out to take pictures we seized the chance to take a rest. After lunch we went for a drive. The sand beat the vehicle constantly and the window was soon covered with sand. Tomorrow my teammate Hai Ning and some more people in our party would be coming up the hill so I felt worried for their safety in such bad weather.

3 Jan, 2006 Qimantage Township

The violent wind went on pounding the windows and rattling the doors. The climate of the plateau was so strange that temperature did not drop with such a big wind but on the contrary it went up to -10°C from -30°C .

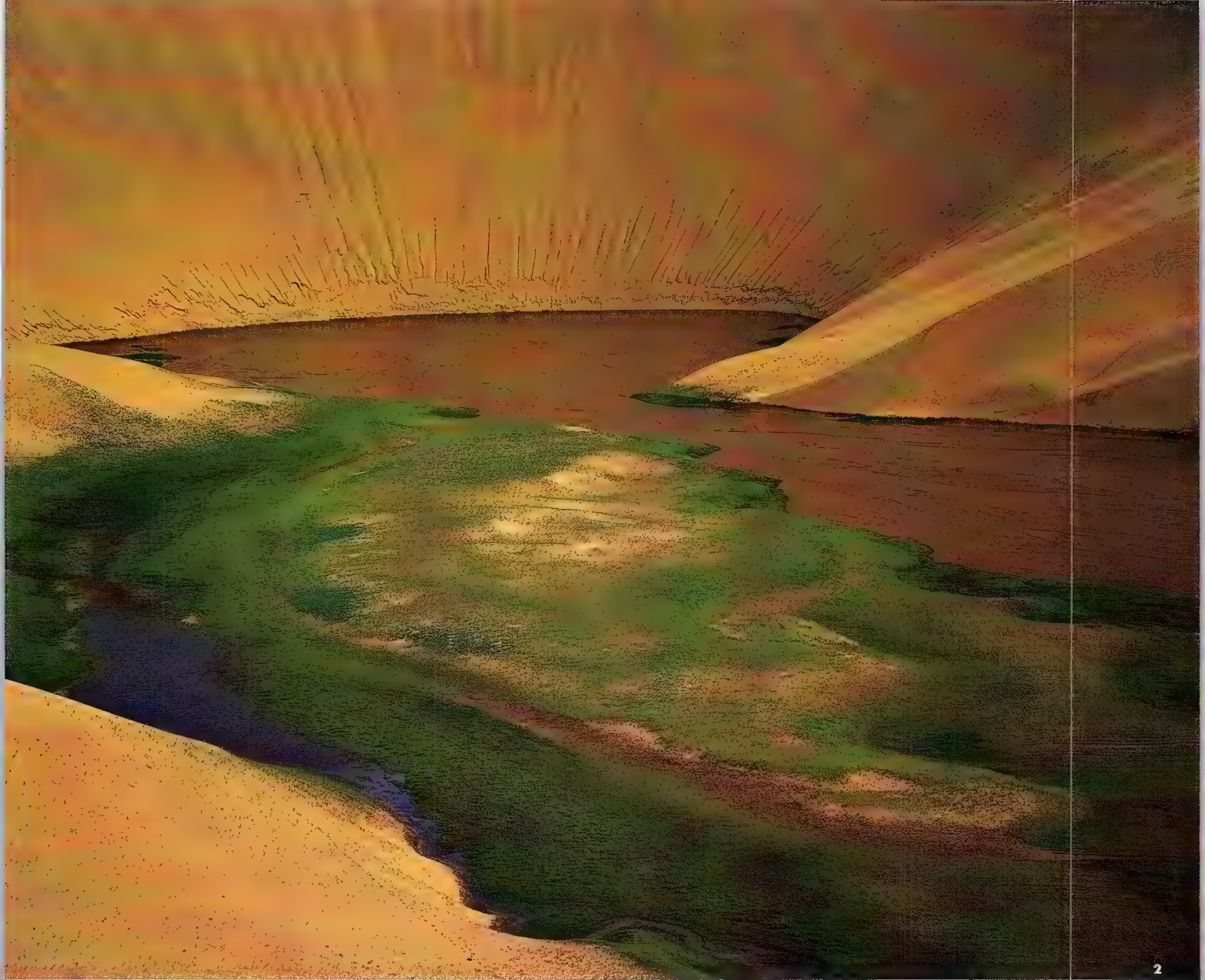
We called Hai Ning by the satellite telephone because I was worried about their safety and at noon I drove to meet them. We were excited to be all together in the evening.

Hai Ning told us there was a traffic accident when another teammate Ban Bencheng went down the hill, and two people had died. One of the two was the wife of a young man working in Atatihon Checkpost, just married only one month ago. We had stayed one night in the checkpost and met the girl so it was a sad shock to hear this news. There is no moonlight outside and the wind is still howling.

4 Jan, 2006 Qimantage Township

The wind was calming and the temperature went up. Looking at the blue sky in the morning my heart





felt light. An old jeep from the protection station was parked in the courtyard and my friend Turxun lit the blowlamp unhurriedly to warm the jeep and added some water. It was a miracle that the old jeep started at all.

We planned to go on gathering materials in the afternoon but a sudden change of the weather with heavy clouds and a sharp wind blocked this plan. We were upset because I told my partners it was the last chance for us to take pictures in Altun Mountains. Since our plan was affected by the weather we considered postponing our schedule to go down the hill depending on financial conditions. We all prayed for a clear day.

5 Jan, 2006 Qimantage Township

We could do nothing about the bad weather so we had agreed last night that we would take pictures in places where wild animals often haunt. In the early morning we packed coal, a stove and firewood and set off to look for grazing areas under the guidance of Aibai. While driving on the frozen Yixiepati Lake, the vehicle nearly fell in so we had to change our route. We were excited to see the sun coming out at about noon time. We decided to return Yixiepati Lake to take pictures of the float grass and the snow scenery of the lake. Working till dark, we had our mind set at rest.

6 Jan, 2006 Township ▶ Shazi Spring ▶ Township

I got up before dawn and walked around with the camera on my shoulder. The Yixiepati Lake was quiet in the winter without the singing birds and fragrant flowers of summer. The surface of the icy lake reflected a ray of golden light by the rising sun and the Kumukule Desert in the distance was covered by pure white snow, looking like a giant snowy mountain.

We went to Shazi Spring again in the bright sunshine. We took pictures while driving forward and arrived at

1. The Qimantage Township. (by Fan Shucui)

2. The Shazi River. (by Li Xueliang)



1. The galloping *kiang*, or Tibetan wild donkey. (by Fan Shucui)

2. Tibetan antelope on the Kardun grassland. (by Fan Shucui)

3. A flock of wild yaks on the desert. (by Li Xueliang)

the farthest parking spot at noon. After eating, we walked towards the mouth of the spring. Walking on the frozen river seemed much easier than on the desert. When we got to the mouth of the spring, an extremely beautiful scene suddenly appeared before our eyes which completely swept away our tiredness. We worked till five when it began to get dark. But we were still reluctant to leave. It took us more than one hour to reach the parking spot because we were all tired.

Tonight, Li Xin, one of our attendants, prepared supper for us. He cooked braised mutton and stir-fried Chinese cabbage with starch noodles and frozen bean curd; all consumed ravenously since we were both tired and hungry. We all praised Li Xin as a good cook, much better than the chefs in nationally famous restaurants.

7 Jan, 2006 Township ▶ Karqiuka ▶ Township

Last night we decided to go to Karqiuka because we could not idly wait in such bad weather. If the sun would come out we could take some pictures of the natural scenery otherwise we would interview the herdsmen there.

So we were on the way to Karqiuka with a high spirit. We saw some *kiangs* on the way. We were getting to love the wild animals of Altun Mountains and delight in the sight of them galloping in the open country.

It was already half past two when we arrived at Karqiuka. Since the light was not good enough for us to take pictures we drove around. We were disappointed to not find a good view. There was only one herdsmen family living in a discarded house, nothing special. We all felt a little upset and so decided to return to base camp after having something to eat.

The weather became even worse on the journey back with violent wind and clouds of dust filling the air. The mountains and desert in the distance were all shrouded in the dust. When we took pictures of the cloud of dust we

even could not stand firm or even talk. Since we could not control the weather and sun we had to be patient.

A Grand herd of wild yak

8 Jan, 2006 Township ▶ Shazi Spring

The days before the Korban Festival were scheduled for taking pictures of wild animals so we went to Qimantage Mountain in the morning to take pictures of *kiangs*. Korban (Eid al-Adha) Festival, also known as Sacrifice Festival, is held on the 10th day of the 12th month in the Islam calendar. Sacrificial ceremonies are made to celebrate with the mecca pilgrimage who arrived Mina from Hill Arafat. We did not want to alert them so we parked our vehicles far away and carried the equipment to go near them. But the animals noticed us and ran away like a gust of wind.

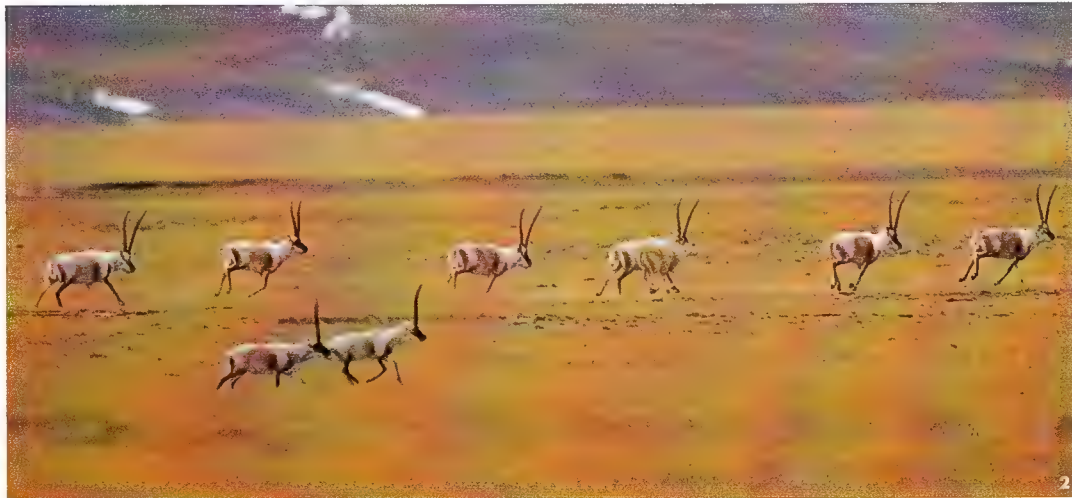
So we went back to our campsite and sorted out our equipment for going to the area of Shazi Spring to look for wild animals. We were told that wild animals commonly hid themselves in a discarded house in that area. On the way we saw about 200 wild yaks but it was a pity that they were startled by the sound of the engine of the vehicle. When we rushed to them they ran crazily towards the desert crowding together. In a twinkling they had disappeared, hiding themselves behind the sand hills.

9 Jan, 2006 Waiting spot ▶ Township ▶ Kardun

Still, not a shadow of the wild animals could be found in the early morning. The four wild yaks near the Shazi Spring we saw last night had also disappeared so we felt very upset.

Fortunately the light was not bad in the morning so we took some panoramic, medium length and close-up shots of Kumukule Desert. At about 11 o'clock the vehicle taking us back arrived so we tidied up to return our campsite at two.

I noticed that there seemed to be something wrong with Li Xin. I asked him what was the problem but he hesitated to tell me that he had got a cold. I was moved by his spirit of bearing the overall interest in his mind but





1. Marshland. (by Fan Shucui)

2. The Kumukule Desert. (by Li Xueliang)

at the same time I was annoyed about not telling me earlier because cold in plateau was a matter of life and death. Therefore I asked Hai Ning to take him down hill to Huatugou Hospital at once.

Tomorrow is Korban Festival – an important news for us to report. We arrived at Kardun at six in the afternoon and interviewed Yasheng, a Uygur herdsman. He had just been married in October and his wife was only 20 years old. It was interesting that they looked like father and daughter when they were together. The couple lived in a pit house, simple and clean.

Warm Korban Festival

10 Jan, 2006 Korban Festival in Kardun

In the tradition of the festival, the families of herdsmen living in Kardun would get together to pray so we started off at seven in the morning to drive Yasheng to his friend Maimaiti's house 10 km away. The five people then went to pray in the tombs behind the mountain. The tombs were piled up with stones without gravestones. They knelt down before the tombs with a line to pray and then the elder took out some corns from his pocket spreading on the tombs, meaning the end of the pray.

The herdsmen in the area of Altun Mountains do not take a holiday vacation for Korban Festival because they have to graze sheep in the day time. There are three households in Kardun housing eight people altogether and since they take turns to stay in each other's homes, tonight they are in Yasheng's house.

The celebration began at eight in the evening with melon seeds, fried cakes, fruits and sweets, the delicacies

of the festival, on the *kang* (heatable brick bed). Mutton was cooked in the high-pressure cooker giving off steam. Sitting on the *kang* in a circle the herdsmen were eating while talking and laughing. We shared their happiness. After eating they put their hands with palms together close to their faces and recited a passage of scriptures, indicating the end of the supper.

And then carnival night began with music. With joyous singing and dancing, the small room was soon full of joy and warmth, marking the climax of the festival celebration. I could see why this was thought to be the happiest day of the herdsmen's year.

11 Jan, 2006 Kardun ▶ Dajiuba ▶ Township

The small room was permeated with smell of alcohol after the carnival. We packed up our equipment to set off to Dajiuba. But suddenly halfway a sandstorm arrived and the way ahead towards Dajiuba was enveloped by clouds. So we decided to return to the township since we could not take pictures in such a terrible weather. By chance we saw a dozen of Tibetan antelope so we took some pictures of them from quite a near distance. That was our reward.

12 Jan, 2006 Township ▶ Jianhu Lake ▶ Township

We planned to go to Dajiuba again today but it was cloudy in the morning. Since everyone of us was tired after 20 busy days on the plateau I thought it was better to let them have a half day rest. When the sky began to clear up at noon tour guide Aibai led us to the Jianhu Lake.

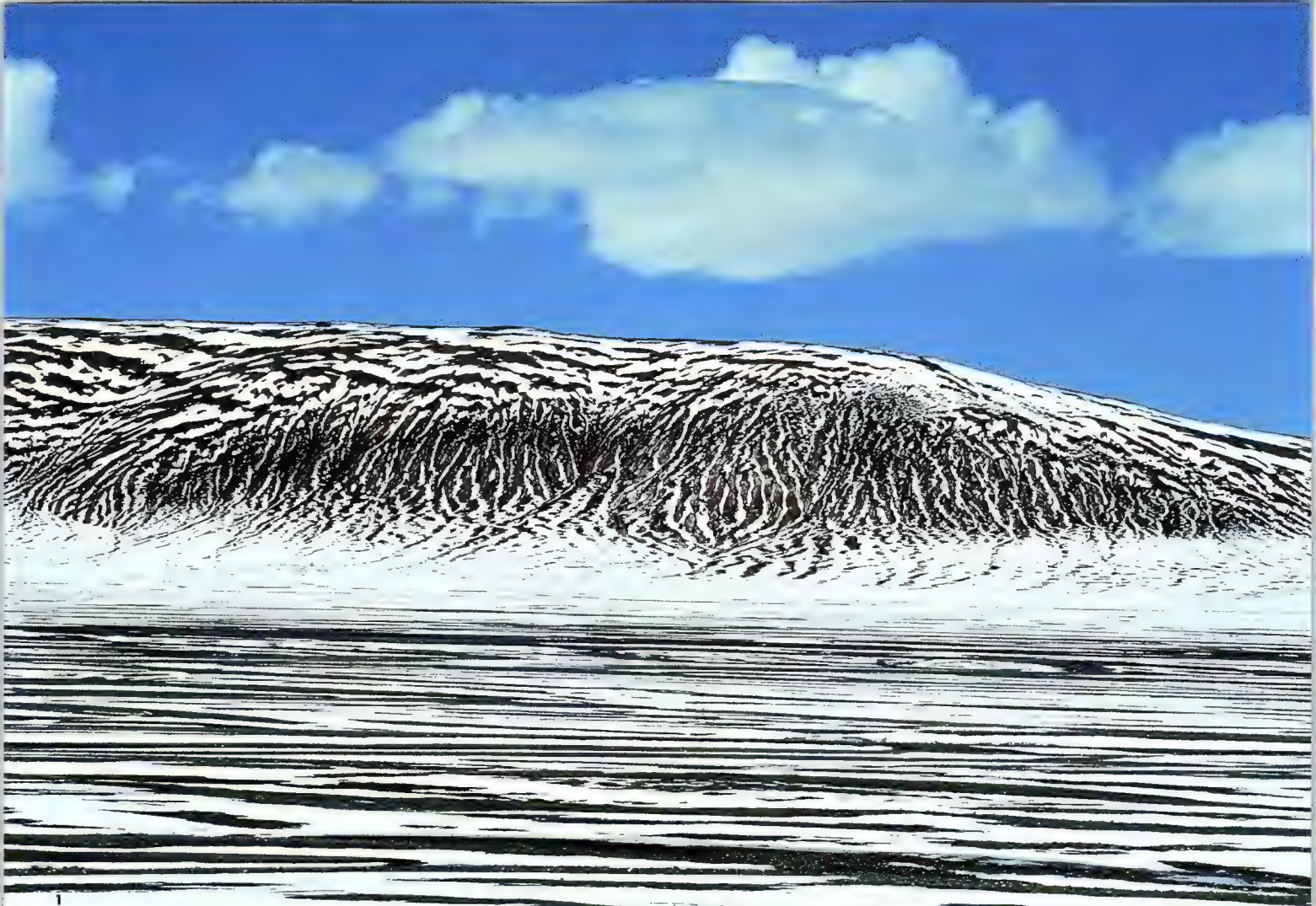
Though we were tired it didn't affect our work. We held a meeting in the evening and we made up our mind to try our best to persist to the last minute regardless of our tiredness.

Sickness

13 Jan, 2006 Township

Today I noticed that our teammate Yang Hong took a lot of medicine and this evening his lips looked grey. I





1. The Altun Mountains in winter.
(by Fan Shucui)

2. Wind-blown snow on the frozen
Ayakekumu Lake. (by Li Xueliang)

asked him what was wrong. He told me he felt a pressure in the chest so I again asked Hai Ning to take him down to a lower altitude. Yang Hong resisted but after persuasion he finally agreed and packed up his things. Xiao Fan and I accompanied Hai Ning and Yang Hong in another vehicle starting at 1:30 in the early morning and arriving at the Dartetan checkpoint at 4:30. Since the road ahead was much better and it was getting light, Xiao Fan and I turned back. Hai Ning continued to drive Yang Hong to the hospital.

On the way back I felt sick at heart and the dangers of the Altun Mountains over the years I had been coming hear resounded in my mind one after another. Our party had come together to search for the beauty of the Altun Mountains. Though we all had different characters, everyone has worked hard regardless of hardships and danger. We seemed to be a big harmonious family. Arriving at the campsite I told myself, 'cheer up, cheer up!' While encouraging myself I led the rest to take pictures.

14 Jan, 2006 Township

This morning we went to Yixiepati Lake to take several shots of the vehicles crossing the frozen river again. I felt befuddled and very tired. Forcing myself to work till lunch time I collapsed against the wall of the car and took a sound nap. Over the past few days Ga Zi and Xiao Ma had put their utmost efforts into the trip. At first I worried about the health of Ga Zi but I did not expect he had done so many things without being asked to at the most critical moments. Xiao Ma too had undertaken all the logistic matters since Hai Ning and Li Xin were on the way to the hospital.

In the afternoon we put up the tents and prepared to take pictures of the campsite. Lamps were lit as the stars appeared in the sky. At that moment we seemed back in the days looking for Muztag Peak.

15 Jan, 2006 Kardun ▶ Dajiuba ▶ Township

Yang Hong, Li Xin and Hai Ning had all retired from the journey due to sickness and another teammate Yanyan has begun to suffer headaches in these days. In light of this and the fact that our food was almost finished, we decided to make today our last effort to go to Dajiuba to take pictures of the antelope. Turxun volunteered to lead us to a place where the antelope often appeared. Being filled with great hope we looked for the antelope with our eyes wide open all the way. But the weather was very unstable and out of our control. Our hopes were finally dashed by a sudden onslaught by violent wind and sand. We had no choice but to go down to the valley tomorrow because we were worn out both physically and mentally.

Farewell

16 Jan, 2006 Township ▶ Huatugou Town

Last night we packed up our equipment and loaded the truck till midnight. We got up at six this morning and were ready to go down the mountain. At that moment I had a mixed feeling. On the one hand I was not reconciled to go down but on the other hand I was eager to go back to the bustling city.

In the morning we took some interviewing shots again in Guaishigou and some shots of the trucks and vehicles crossing the Dartetan River. I looked at Altun Mountains for the last time with steady eyes. The mountain's unique beauty wrenched me with its suddenness. It is a place I have been yearning for by day and night. I have a feeling of both love and resentment to leave. We gradually left it far behind.

17 Jan, 2006 Huatugou Town

I spent almost the whole morning in the hospital because Chen Yan had an injection and Yang Hong was diagnosed as having myocardial ischemia and arrhythmia, meaning he could not go up the plateau ever again. Li Xin had basically recovered from his cold and Hai Ning still coughed a little. We had a sumptuous lunch in the town and felt much better.

We packed up our photographic and logistic equipment in the afternoon to get ready for going back tomorrow.

18 Jan, 2006 Huatugou Town ▶ Ruoqiang County

There was silence in the car as each person looked forward to getting back home as smoothly as possible.

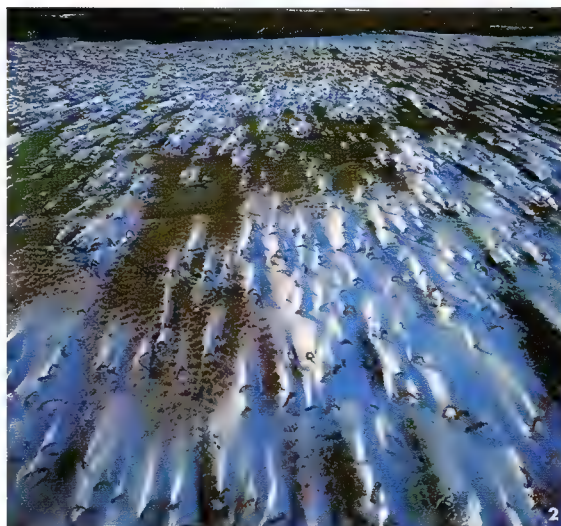
19 Jan, 2006 Ruoqiang County ▶ Korla

It was time to say goodbye to Yang Hong in Korla. We had shared hardships and joy together through the past 100 days. At the moment of parting I said quietly in my heart, 'Thank you! Take good care of yourself, my good buddy!'

20 Jan, 2006 Korla ▶ Ürümqi

We arrived home in the afternoon.

Translated by Wang Zengfen



About the Author

A famous photographer from Shandong Province, Li Xueliang specializes in landscape photography of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and has been resident in Xinjiang for many years.

Altun Mountains Nature Reserve

The largest amongst its kind in China, the Altun Mountains Nature Reserve is under the jurisdiction of Bayingolin Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture, located at the south of Altun Mountains and north of East Kunlun Mountains. It starts from the boundary of Ruoqiang and Qiemo counties in the west and extends to the juncture of Xinjiang and Qinghai Province in the east, Qimantage Mountain south of Altun Mountains in the north and the eastern Kunlun mountain ranges in the south. This area nears the boundary of Xinjiang and Tibet autonomous regions, with a length of 360 km from east to west and a breadth of 190 km from south to north. The scenic area's total area is 44,940 sq km.

The Altun Mountains Nature Reserve is surrounded by mountains, the highest being Muztag Peak at 6,973 metres. Within the reserve can be found various landforms, such as modern glacial, plateau lakes, and plateau desert,

and various species of wild animals and birds such as *kiang* (Tibetan wild donkey), *chiru* (Tibetan antelope), yak, wild camel, black-necked crane, and 241 species of wild plants.



The Dyeing Art of South China

Photo & Article • Xie Guanghui

A deep blue and white patterned cotton cloth has covered my dining room table for years. Whenever I look at it, the charming water-towns of South China instantly come to mind with their exquisitely carved stone bridges, the simple homes lining the river, the stone steps of the piers extending from under their roofs and the awning-topped boats drifting past.

1



1. Workers at the Feng Tong Yu dye works deftly hang newly dyed lengths of indigo fabric to dry in the sun.

2. Laxie is similar to batik, but instead of wax, a mixture of lime and bean powder is used to create the elegant pattern.

A French friend who came to my home for dinner gazed at the cloth with admiration: 'It's amazing!' I had to agree, but what makes this simple, traditional Jiangnan-style cloth so attractive?

Following a Pattern

In general, there are three ancient Chinese fabric printing and dyeing techniques: *Jiaxie* (*Xie* meant 'printing and dyeing' in ancient Chinese), *Laxie* and *Jiaoxie*. *Laxie*-treated clothing, similar to batik or wax dyeing, is still worn by people of the Guizhou ethnic group. *Jiaoxie*, also known as tie-dyeing, can be found in the dress of the Bai ethnic group in Dali, Yunnan. *Jiaxie*, or board dyeing, involves carving patterns into wooden boards, rather like stencils. These are secured over a sheet of fabric and different shades of dye are painted over the various stencils to create a multicoloured pattern. This dyeing method is not widely practised outside certain remote villages in Wenzhou, south of Zhejiang Province.

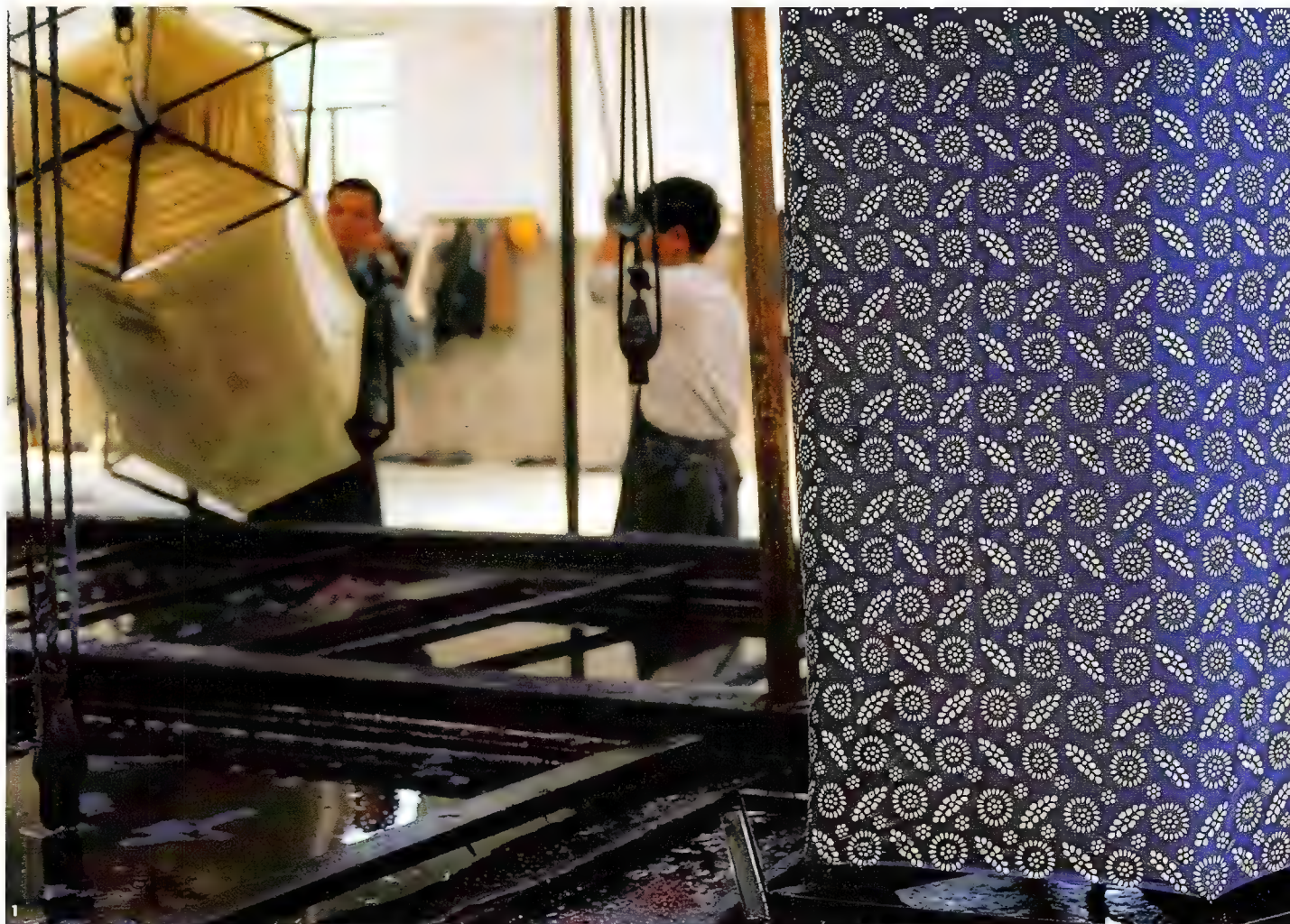
Threads of History

According to historical documents, the *Jiaxie* dyeing technique was first practised in the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220). However, the oldest existing examples of this kind of cloth printing only date from the Tang Dynasty (618–907). These include the colourful *Jiaxie* robe adorning the statue of the Bodhisattva in the Dunhuang Grottoes and some *Jiaxie* pieces (now preserved in the British Museum)

unearthed from the 'Western Regions' (the Han Dynasty name for present-day Xinjiang and parts of Central Asia). The 'White Flower and Bird' patterned *Jiaxie* fabric taken to Japan by a Tang Dynasty monk is now kept in the Shosoin at Todai-ji in Nara, Japan. Surprisingly, these very precious treasures are made of colourful silk, suggesting that Tang Dynasty fabrics were elegant and luxurious. But just as *jiaxie* techniques were being perfected, the Song Dynasty (960–1279) tightened its belt. Uniforms for palace guards and cloth articles for sacrifice were made of simpler *jiaxie* fabric instead of silk during this period, saving the country a great deal of money. In the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368), cotton was widely planted and used and soon superseded silk as the main clothing material. Cotton, however, is several times more absorbent than silk, meaning much more dye had to be used to achieve the same rich colour. As a result, the prices of coloured dyes shot up and single-colour dye jobs became more prevalent. Indigo, which was widely planted in the area, was the first choice of the common people. At the same time, wooden board stencils were replaced by much simpler and cheaper cardboard stencils. The deep blue patterned cotton fabric soon became extremely popular all over the country. This is the indigo fabric that we know today.

Fabric of Everyday Life

In the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368–1911),



indigo print cotton reached its zenith and became an indispensable part of life in Jiangnan. From clothing and headdresses to bedding, tents, bags, tablecloths and curtains, indigo print cotton was everywhere. It was the fabric of choice in the countryside for brides to be. When babies reached their one month and one year birthdays, indigo garments were specially made for them. There were no fabric shops, however. Rather, the local women worked tirelessly, picking cotton in the fields, de-seeding and drying the bolls, and spinning and weaving them into cloth in their precious spare time. After months of hard work, the woven cloth was taken to the local dye works. Indigo print cotton patterns, often gleaned from folk tales and operas, are steeped in meaning. Typical patterns include auspicious flowers, birds, fish and insects, which are meant to convey good intentions. In ancient China, every country bride had to produce a menu written on a piece of indigo cloth as a symbol of the good job she would do in the kitchen of her husband's home. A bride's hope chest included several indigo print cotton bedcovers decorated with auspicious

dragon, phoenix and flower patterns. Such bedcovers made up the traditional trousseau.

Feng Tong Yu Dye Works

The family of famous Chinese cartoonist Feng Zikai (1898—1975) once ran a dyeing firm in Shimen (Stone Door) Town, Tongxiang, Zhejiang Province.

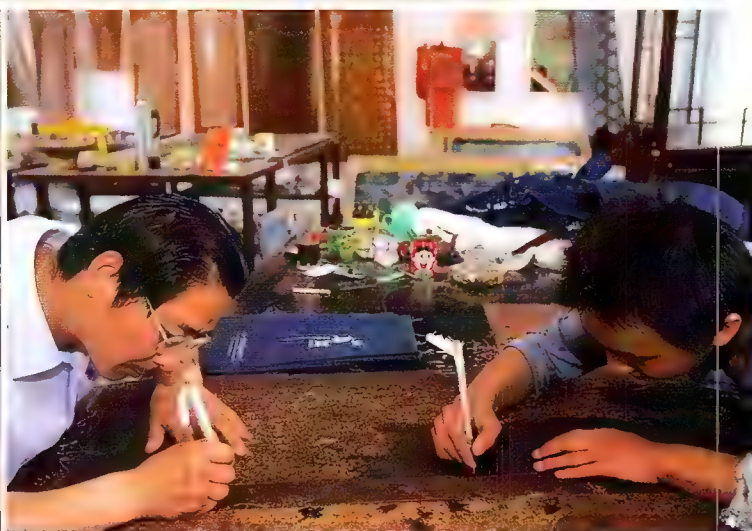
In 1843, Feng Zikai's grandfather, Feng Zhaoqing, established the two-storey Feng Tong Yu dye works in the family compound of three large halls and three courtyards. The first hall served as the storefront, the second hall was the sitting room and the third hall housed the kitchen. Feng Zikai was born upstairs above the sitting room. His father died when he was eight, after which the dye works came under his mother's management. During this time the firm enjoyed its most prosperous period. When the Anti-Japanese War (1937—1945) broke out, the entire family left Shimen Bay. Feng Tong Yu was badly damaged by Japanese cannon fire soon after. Feng Zikai went on to become a famous cartoonist and

1. After the lime and bean powder mixture dries, the cloth is repeatedly dipped into the indigo dye.

2. Jiaxie involves applying dye on a cloth through a stencil-like pattern board.

3. The lime and bean powder is scraped off after the cloth dries, revealing the blue-and-white pattern.

4. Engravers carve intricate patterns into dyeing boards.



writer rather than take up his family's profession. This was only to be expected as the development of modern dyeing technologies all but replaced traditional fabric-printing methods.

In recent years, however, the rise of tourism in the water villages of Jiangnan has sparked new interest in traditional culture and, with it, the return of indigo print cotton. In 2003, Shimen County salvaged the Feng Tong Yu dye works, not only re-establishing Feng Zikai's family business, but also ensuring that this traditional skill lives on. Today, all sorts of souvenirs made from the dyed cloth can be found in the water villages of Zhouzhuang, Tongli, Wuzhen, Xitang and other towns throughout Jiangnan.

The dye extracted from indigo plants is highly resistant to repeated washings and prolonged exposure to the sun. The natural dye is also environmentally friendly. Traditional craftsmanship gives it a refreshingly simple and personal charm that chemical dyes and mechanized printing methods cannot duplicate.

I recently acquired an indigo print cotton piece entitled 'Picture of 100 Sons'. Because it is an older piece, I am reluctant to use it. So I have framed it instead and have it hanging on my wall. Although this 'elder sister' hails from an ancient royal kingdom, she and her younger, humbler twin covering my table complement one another beautifully.

Translated by Nicole Ouyang



The Hakka Earthen Towers

Photos & Article • Gu Na

Yongding County in Fujian Province is known for the exotic earthen buildings of local Hakka people. From a reference I read before my trip I learnt with surprise that of the 20,000-plus Hakka earthen towers all over China Yongding seats more than 4,360, of which 360 are amphitheater-shaped and 4,000-plus square. It takes people ten years to see them all at the speed of visiting one everyday.

High Esteem for Guests

My first stop in Yongding County was Hukeng Town, where the famous Zhencheng earthen compound of Hongkeng Village is located. Hongkeng, formerly called Hongchuan, appeals to tourists with its Hakka architectures and ethnic culture.

Built in 1912, Zhencheng is the largest earthen building in the village — covering an area of 5,000 square metres. The design ensures it is proof against theft, wind, earthquake, fire and dampness. The compound consists of two rings of concentric buildings. The outer building is of four floors, with 48 rooms on each. Every six rooms encompass a unit with independent stairway, called Gua. The Guas are



partitioned by fire walls, so a fire in any of them cannot spread to other parts of the building. There are arch gates in the partition walls to join these Guas together. When thieves come in, they are closed to block the intruders.

At the heart of the compound is the Ancestral Hall, a circular two-story building of 30 rooms.

Part of the compound has been converted into a hotel. At the check-in desk I was told that the compound is home to 14 households of more than 70 people, who



are formerly farmers, and now lives on tourism revenues. They live on the third floor, and save the upper floor for guests to show respect. The lower two floors are kitchens and storage space. The guest rooms are simply but pleasantly furnished, cost 35 yuan each per night.

Offering Sacrifice to the God of Tree

I strolled around the Zhencheng Tower the next morning. An elder villager was sunning pickled vegetables at the wall, a specialty of the region. The vegetable is steamed and dried five times alternately before ready for eating. It tastes the best when steamed with half-fat pork slices, a dish I had soon after my arrival, and still drool on recalling the daintiness.

Outside the compound are elaborately planned lawns and bamboo fence, a beautiful scene that however looks odd in the rustic backdrop, particularly around the ancient earthen castle. It's said the area was a paddy field before converted into green belts in an attempt to cater for tourists.

At the heart of the village my attention was caught by a homage-paying ceremony at a 600-year-old tree that is believed locals' guardian god. Villagers carried offerings — fish, meat, fruit and wine — in bamboo baskets, placed them under the tree, prayed, and then fired firecrackers. The brief rite was repeated by one and

1. It's said the round earthen buildings startled American spy jet pilots in the 1960s, as they looked like missile launchers when looking from the sky.

2. Locals believe the God of Tree looks after their village, and deserves sacrifice regularly.

3. Carved stone steles in the Deyuan Hall are meant to pass the names of respectable members of the clan down the generations.

4. The 600-year-old 'Tumbledown Tower' demonstrates the quake-resistance of Hakka earthen complex.



another until the venue was cloaked in thick mist of burnt incense and fired crackers.

Then I roamed to Rusheng Tower, the least visited of earthen mansions in the village because of its small size and out-of-the-way location. There is a story on why it was named so. When a scholar was invited to give it a name on its completion, he secretly despised that the building was as small as a *sheng* 升 (a tool to measure grain), and said 'Rusheng (like a *sheng*)' without a second thought. When challenged by some if the name was auspicious, he interpreted the term otherwise: like the rising (another meaning of the character *sheng*) sun. So the crowds accepted the name with delight.

On my way back I passed the Rui'ai Tower, a square structure of modest size, and met its host. The man of 70s has been living in the building since he retired from the village's primary school. He now enjoys a life of peace with his big family, and takes pride in having six college graduates in his children and grandchildren, of whom one is studying in the U.S.

with brown sugar, egg white and cooked sticky rice.

Leaning Earthen Tower

The next day I headed for Tianluokeng in Nanjing County, where a number of earthen buildings congregated.

On the way I discovered a few more nice earthen buildings by chance. One is the Deyuan Building in Taxia Village by the Qujiang River. What is remarkable about it is the scores of stone poles in front of its ancestral temple. Commemorating residents who brought honor to the village in old times, these steles, seven to eight metres in height, are elaborately carved with animal patterns and characters. The ones with lions atop are for people who held military posts, and those whose upper ends are shaped into brush pens' tips are for civil officials.

Another is the Yuchang Tower in Xiaban Village. Better known as the Tumbledown (Dong Dao Xi Wai) Tower, the five-story structure has amazingly survived more than 600 years with all veranda pillars in the third



Ingenious Temblor-resistant Design

There is a temple for Tianhou, or Goddess of the Sea, at the village entrance, a rare sight in mountainous regions far from the coast. Locals gave two explanations: 1) their ancestors shipped local-grown tobacco by sea, so they prayed for the goddess' blessing for the voyages; 2) as the villagers have the same last name as the goddess — Lin, they deem her as their progenitor, and worship her twice a year.

I was told no amphitheatric earthen buildings had collapsed in previous earthquakes thanks to their round shape that can evenly disperse the power of shock. The flexible materials — such as bamboo and wood strips — imbedded in the wall also increase the buildings' resistance to convulsion. Besides, the Hakkas has a unique way of making earthen walls — mix red earth

floor and above slant for as much as 15 degrees, making it a parallel to the leaning tower of Pisa. The wryly-figured building is a big attraction of the region, and brings a decent income to its owners, who charge 10 yuan on each visitor.

An Artistic Spectacular in the Wilderness

The Sight-seeing Stage is the only spot to overlook all the five earthen buildings in Tianluokeng Village. Business-savvy villagers now collect fees for access. The five buildings, four circular and one quadrate, assemble a marvelous sight in the field when looked from above.

There are various stories on why the place is named Tianluokeng, meaning snail pit. One is that the mountain behind the village looks like a snail. And another says that the founder of the village Huang Baisanlang made a

1. All rooms in an earthen tower look the same, making the compound a labyrinth.

2. Earthen compounds are proof against theft, gust, earthquake, fire and dampness.

3. There are 360 amphitheatric earthen buildings in Yongding County alone.



3

fortune with help of a fairy lady of snail. According to the Huang family's genealogy, Huang Baisanlang moved to this place from Yongding County during the reign of Qing Emperor Jiaqing more than 200 years ago. He started with raising ducks, and became wealthy after years of hard work. With his money, he built the square-shaped Buyun Tower, hoping it would bring a better future for the village as the name implies.

Following the Buyun Tower, the Hechang, Zhenchang and Ruiyun were erected one after another. The 1936-built Ruiyun Tower stands out among the others for the tap water facilities in its inter circle court, contributions by a Chinese American couple during their hometown-visiting trip. The oval-shaped mansion Wenchang was completed in 1966, a miracle in the chaotic age when all things related to tradition were deemed backward and prohibited.

When I opened eyes at dawn of the next morning, a sea of gorgeous clouds was surging at the skyline. Grasping our cameras, my friends and I rushed up the mountain to take snaps of the rising sun. In our small racing group was a photography fan in the village, who exclaimed with excitement: 'You lucky guys hit a chance of several years in your first day of stay.'

Translated by Yu Ling

Distribution of Hakka Earthen Towers in Yongding



Travel Tips

Transportation: There are scheduled buses from Xiamen or Zhangzhou city to Nanjing County everyday. Tourists may change buses from Nanjing County to Tianluokeng Village in Shuyang Township. The Hukeng Village in Yongding County is 20 km from Tianluokeng. An efficient way is to go there by taking a local motorbike "taxi," or take a bus which its schedule is sparse.

Accommodation: There are several private inns in Tianluokeng with public bathrooms and shower facilities, charging 20 to 30 yuan per person. The Zhencheng and Fuyu buildings in Hongkeng Village offer nice guest rooms and cost 20 yuan per person. There is usually no toilet in the fourth floor and above.



At Home on the Range — The Tuwa

Photos & Article • Du Dianwen



Some 2,000 Tuwa live deep within the Altay Mountains. These herders of North China are not to be confused with the Mongolians or other ethnic minorities in the area. They have their own unique culture, speak the ancient Turki language, live in log homes, and survive on herding and nature's bounty.

The roots of the Tuwa ethnic group, also referred to as the Dubo, Tubasi, Suoyute or Dewa, can be traced to the upper reaches of the Yenisey (Yenisei) River in southern West Siberia. The Tuwa mainly inhabit three villages near Kanas Lake in Xinjiang's Altay region — Hemu, Kanas and Baihaba — which come under the governance of Burqin County and Habahe County, respectively. There is a Tuwa district in Burqin County, while larger contingents, found in Russia and Mongolia, total nearly 200,000.

China's Largest Tuwa Village

Hemu Village, at the north end of Burqin County, covers an area of over 1,000 sq km. Of the 1,400 people living there, the Tuwa number 846, making up nearly three-quarters of the population. It is the biggest, most concentrated and best-preserved Tuwa village in China, and the Hemu Kanas local government is located there.

Nearly 170 km from Burqin County, Hemu Village is the most remote of the three Tuwa villages.



The journey there is no walk in the park either, as mountains, valleys, forests, meadows, and seemingly endless stretches of Gobi desert must be crossed to get there. Aside from 40 km of bitumen-surfaced road, the rest of the trip is made on sandy lanes and dirt roads usually only accessible by truck or jeep.

Mukeleng Log Homes

The first thing that stands out upon arriving at Hemu is the rows of Mukeleng huts, the biggest and most concentrated group of which can be found near the village government office. Some 250 of them cluster on the southeast banks of the Hemu River. Each Mukeleng hut is surrounded by a log fence, with livestock sheds nearby.

The log huts seem simple, primitive even, and are suited to a herder lifestyle. Each hut has a door but no windows and most are partially underground. A hut's base may be square or many-sided, but the roofs are all gently curved and covered with a thick layer of earth, with a single hole in the middle to let smoke escape. Because the roofs of the huts are overgrown with tall, thick weeds, we mistook them for graves when we first saw them. It wasn't until we noticed cooking smoke wafting out that we realized they were people's homes. These traditional Tuwa houses are modelled on Mongolian tents, and some of these remain as well. Many of the older ones have been converted into kitchens or restaurants.

Once the building materials are assembled, a Mukeleng hut can be erected in the space of a month by just a few people. The logs are bought from a local timber mill. Warm and damp-proof, the huts are an excellent shelter against the region's fierce weather conditions.

Earning Their Keep

We visited a herder's family at the Jibailing grazing point. The picturesque scenery, near some streams at the foot of a hill, was straight off a postcard. Our host's family had one Mukeleng hut and two Mongolian tents, nearly 100 goats, 30 cows and 50 horses. They earn 7,000 ~ 8,000 yuan a year selling

livestock.

The breeding of red deer has only been going on for the last 20 years and is mainly done for the antlers, which can sell for 1,500 per kilogram. Bee-keeping, said to have been learnt from the Russians, has been around for over a century. Siberian wild bees don't produce much honey due to a very short production period of less than 20 days (usually from July 1 ~ 20). However, the quality of the honey is superb and it sells for some 60 yuan per kilogram locally. Many buy honey for medicinal purposes. I tasted some; the sweet, fragrant nectar left a lasting impression.

Many of the Tuwa gather pine nuts on the mountains, collecting up to two or three kilos per person per day. Historically, the Tuwa survived by hunting and fishing, but as the number of game animals dwindled and government restrictions were imposed, they had to find other ways to sustain themselves.

Hybrid Local Language

There is no written form of the Tuwa language,

1. Hemu Village is far from the crowds and noise of modern civilization.

2. A typical Tuwa couple.

3. Overgrown with weeds, the roof of a Mukeleng hut resembles a grave from afar.

4. Modernization is slowly impacting the Tuwa lifestyle.

5. The Tuwa also plant wheat and barley, but because of transport limitations it is only used as animal feed by the herders themselves.





and only standard Mongolian is taught at the local Tuwa school. However, everyone, young and old, speaks the native Tuwa language. According to the locals, the Tuwa tongue is drawn from Kazakh and Mongolian mixed with some other components, including the Turki language (once spoken by the Turks, a nationality in ancient China). As such, the language is a 'living fossil' for the study of Turki languages.

Lieba Bread and Milk Liquor

The Tuwa diet is similar to that of other herding cultures. What sets them apart is that they eat a type of bread called lieba and brew their own milk liquor. The making of each is unique and both carry distinctive regional characteristics.

Lieba is also called *da nang* ('big pancake') by the locals, reportedly because of Russian influences.

The sweet lieba is baked to a golden crust and the task of making it falls to the women. Every household normally makes a batch once every four or five days. It's delicious, costs very little to make, is easy to carry and can be kept for a long time. The local Tuwa have lieba with almost every meal, serving it thinly sliced with yak butter, cheese and milk liquor.

Milk liquor is white and tastes faintly of milk. The alcohol content can vary from as high as 50 percent to as low as 8 percent. Milk liquor is brewed every year between June and September. Usually every household prepares about 200 kilograms. The Tuwa are partial to milk liquor; everyone likes a tippie. Served in big bowls from plastic buckets, several bowls of the concoction are drunk at one sitting.

The Tuwa practise Lamaism and are ready to lend a helping hand to anyone in need. They go out of their way to show their hospitality to visitors. Despite their relative poverty, not one of them would think of blindly cutting down a tree, or randomly developing a piece of land — this is probably the only place in China where this is true!

Translated by Cheng Lei



1. The Tuwa are fond of dairy foods. Cheese is a favourite.

2. Sweet, golden lieba bread is a staple food of the Tuwa.

Travel Tips

To Burqin County:

Transport: Tourists may take an express night train from Urumqi. Fare: 150 yuan. Four people travelling together can hire a car for 200 ~ 300 yuan per person. Or fly from Urumqi to Altay, then take a bus to Burqin County.

Accommodation: Burqin County has over 100 hotels to choose from, including 13 star-rated accommodations, the best being four-star. These include:

Burqin County Travel Hotel, Youyifeng Hotel, Yuntai Hotel, Kunlun Hotel. Standard rooms: 150 yuan (prices vary according to season).

To Hemu Village:

Transport: Buses travel to Hemu Village every two or three days. Fare: 50 yuan. Or hire a car for 1,200 yuan for a two-day return trip.

Accommodation: Hemu Village has several privately run hotels with rooms costing 100 ~ 200 yuan per night.

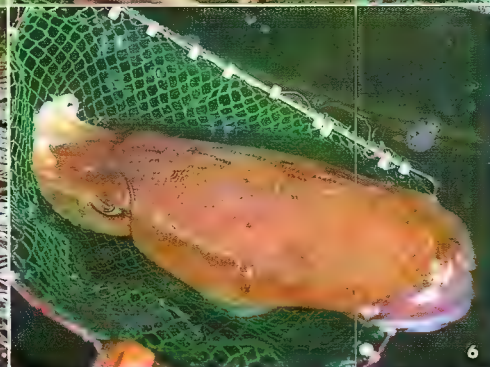
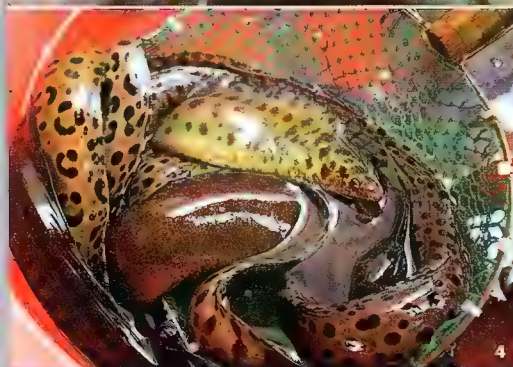
To Kanas:

Transport: Tourist buses travel to Kanas Village. Fare: 50 yuan. Or hire a car for a two-day return trip at 1,200 yuan.

Admission: 130 yuan Transfer bus fare: 80 yuan

Total: 210 yuan

Accommodation: There are two corporate hotels in Kanas with standard room rates of 300 ~ 400 yuan.



Nan'ao — Fish Market in Shenzhen

Photos & Article • Guan Jingbo

When you're tired of the feasting, drinking and nightlife that characterise Shenzhen, there are still some places of natural beauty to check out — like Nan'ao, a small fishing port that looks across the sea to Hong Kong's Tung Ping Chau.



Cradled in Moon Bay

Nan'ao is situated in the eastern suburbs of Shenzhen, accessible from Hong Kong by direct bus. From the bus stop at the Nan'ao market, a three minute walk takes you to Nan'ao port. Crescent in shape thus explaining its Chinese name 'Moon Bay' (Yueliang Wan), the port features a wharf at one end romantically named 'Double Embrace Wharf' (Shuangyong Matou). Many sampan boats and small fishing boats are moored at the port; while on the horizon is visible a small flat island: Hong Kong's Ping Chau island, behind which is Sai Kung.

Seafood — Tasty to the Palate, Easy on the Wallet

Like Sai Kung in Hong Kong, there is no shortage of seafood stalls and restaurants at Double Embrace wharf and Moon Bay. Here you'll find not just local produce, but imported seafood as well. Prices are much cheaper compared with Hong Kong, thus the area attracts hordes of Shenzhen residents and tourists on weekends and holidays, some even as far as Guangzhou. Naturally we weren't going to miss out. We ordered boiled prawns, crabs with ginger and shallots, salt and pepper yabbies, pea sprouts cooked in stock, and a sea bream weighing close to a kilogram, as well as local Nan'ao sea urchin cooked sashimi style, and sea snails. For the main course we asked for fried noodles in soy sauce and a big pot of chicken porridge made from locally reared



chickens. The five of us — all grown men, polished off the lot. For a sumptuous feast like this, the bill came to less than 500 yuan.

Yu told us that Nan'ao has a population of around 5,000 and because it is only accessible by one road, it is a very safe place. There are no discos, karaoke lounges or big stores. Yu says he loves the fresh air and fishing village ambience of Nan'ao. At the Double Embrace wharf in the afternoon, you can gaze at the fish swimming under the wharf, watch fishing boats return one by one, observe the fishermen moving their haul onshore and bargaining with the fish buying merchants, while over on the other side of the market, some fishermen place plates of fish on the ground for sale.

At the rear of Moon Bay is a fishing village where

(Previous page)

1. Fugu fish decorations.
2. Fresh sea urchin, eaten raw, or steamed.
3. Boiled slugs, delightfully sweet and firm.
4. Seafood passes from boat to pot, freshness guaranteed.
5. Fish drying
6. Live cuttlefish. It's said that cuttlefish die soon after being shocked into ejecting ink.
7. Double Embrace wharf at Nan'ao's Moon Bay. In the distance lies Hong Kong's Ping Chau.





3

a few sampan boats have run aground after the tide receded. Here, simple houses line both sides of the street and fishermen sit outside fixing their nets or feeding fish to their dogs.

Close Links with Tai O in Hong Kong

Like Hong Kong's Tai O, there are many shrimp paste and shrimp sauce producers to be found at Nan'ao. Some are indigenous Ma Wan residents from Hong Kong and some producers have been making shrimp paste in Tai O for generations. Their products are sold in Nan'ao, shipped back to Hong Kong and even exported.

We were given a tour of Yu's drying plant, where rows of bamboo sheets were filled with small fish and shrimp paste. The fish had a somewhat unusual appearance — due to the long spike in its mouth it is named 'fairy crane with magic needle'. The workers at the drying plant are mostly Hakka ethnic people from Guangdong's Zijin County who also raise chickens and grow vegetables on the hills just behind their living quarters. That night we were invited to one of the worker's homes, to indulge in a feast of country style Hakka fare: home-grown vegetables and chicken, Hakka cured meat, fish cooked in rice wine,

some more fish that we brought and copious amounts of home made rice wine. This deliciously tangy and sweet liquor made from glutinous rice is usually drunk by Hakka women after giving birth. Each family has its own recipe, so the flavour and colour may be subtly different.

That night was a still night in Nan'ao. Aside from a slight sea breeze, a luminescent moon shone on the calm sea. At around 3 ~ 4 a.m., voices and the sound of motors disrupted the quiet night — the day starts early for the fishermen. After breakfast, we hired a car to visit the other side of the Dapeng Peninsula, where there are two beautiful beaches: Dongyong and Xiyong; as well as an international standard golf course with views of the hills and the sea.

Beautiful Beaches of Dongchong and Xichong

Dongchong and Xichong are equally beautiful beaches — with fine sands and clear waters. The day we went it was rather deserted as it was in the off season, but we were told that the beaches attract lots of swimmers in the hotter months, with a variety of water sports being offered. We can only hope that the growing number of tourists take care of the environment here and keep this fishing port safe from pollution.



Translated by Cheng Lei

1. Restaurants serving up delicious and value for money seafood at Moon Bay.

2. Beautiful Xichong Beach lies on the other side of Nan'ao.

3. Nan'ao's clean waters mean better shrimp and a superior quality of shrimp paste. (by Old Yu)

4. Nan'ao Seafood Street is a must for buying souvenirs.

5. At Seafood Street you can buy Nan'ao's specialities — shrimp sauce and shrimp paste.



4

Travel Tips



Transportation:

A direct bus departs from Kowloon Tong in Hong Kong to Nan'ao. The bus departs daily every 15 minutes between 07:00 and 18:30. The fare is HK\$60

Enquiries:

Eternal East Tours Tel: (852) 3412 6677

Dongqiao Travel Tel: (852) 2857 6210

Reminder:

Buses travel from Nan'ao to Liantang and Yinhu bus terminals in Shenzhen passing through Greater and Lesser Meisha, Yantian Port, Sha Tau Kok, Shennan Boulevard. Length of time: 1.5 hours

Fare: 16 yuan

Mini-vans can be chartered from Nan'ao to places like Dongyong and Xiyong beaches, but the price should be negotiated with the driver first, they usually cost around 120 yuan. From Nan'ao to

Shenzhen's Luo Hu usually costs 180 ~ 200 yuan.

Driver: (Mr Xie) 137 1529 3187

Tours:

September to December is the season for making shrimp paste. If you want to see how shrimp paste and shrimp sauce are made, contact Mr Hu: 137 2559 7225

Accommodation:

There are several small hotels in Nan'ao, with rates between 150 ~ 350 yuan. If better views are required, the Lijing Haiwan Hotel has rooms facing the beach which cost between 250 ~ 350 yuan.



Refresh at the Nansha Grand Hotel

The boat takes only 70 minutes to arrive Nansha, a town in South East China's Guangdong Province – almost as long as taking a ferry to Zhuhai. There my friend and I enjoyed in a luxurious life at a five-star hotel.

Photos & Article • Dianna

I've been to Nansha on business trip many years ago, but the impression was fuzzy. Revisiting it this time, I was really surprised by its experienced and high-efficiency services at the customs. More, when we saw the well-planned city structure and afforested scene, my friend but exclaimed, 'If it is not the difference of the sky's colour, I almost believe I am in Lijiang!' In fact, we felt even better than being in Lijiang, because we needed not to take a bus to there – we could walk to the hotel on our left hand sides in five minutes!

Not only feeling excited, we also felt solemn when entering the lobby of this five-star hotel, for it's the last masterpiece – after Guangzhou's Swan Hotel, Zhongshan's Spring Hotel and the Beijing Grand Hotel – invested by Dr Henry Fok Ying Tung, a patriotic billionaire who passed away recently. The investment reached 880 million yuan, and the hotel is the first wholly foreign-owned super-



luxurious five-star seascape hotel in Guangdong.

Although the hotel has already opened for more than one year, it is very low profile. However, from its furnish at lobby, lamp decoration, the marble floor of a restaurant, classical paintings hanged on the walls in the washing rooms, to the huge chandelier in the teahouse, the hotel give us pleasant surprise everywhere.

We stayed in the most basic double room, which already had a 180-degree seaview. Looking far into the distance from the window, besides the expansive Lingding Sea view, the most captivating was the colourful swimming pool designed in elegant shapes and the garden view. Paying only a hundred-more dollars for the ferry ticket and I could be in such a paradise, why we have to spend more time and money to Hainan Island, Thailand, or Maldives?

The most important programme of this tour was, of course, Spa. The hotel offers a multiple skin nursing and



hydrotherapy menu, and has employed native reputable physiotherapists from Thailand. The nursing products are also pure and natural without chemical compositions.

With warm sunshine and mild breeze from the sea, my friend and I selected the outdoor seashore tents to experience the fragrant oil massage and Chinese massage. The feature of the former one is the fragrant oil, mixing eight kinds of oil essence, is chosen according to the physical and habits of the guest, and helps to release one's pressure effectively. An hour later, we woke up from the sweet dream and tasted a cup of hot tea before returning to our room. In the evening, we tried the sole reflecting massage and Shanghai foot trimming. Again it was a high-quality enjoyment!

The hotel is recently constructing the Spring Spa, a state-of-the-art spa centre where inside are men's and women's individual massage rooms, bathing pools, sauna, advanced spa facilities. There will also be rock-climbing playgrounds and dance rooms. I am sure to visit Nansha very soon!



1. Enjoy the beautiful view looking from the guestroom of the Nansha Grand Hotel.
2. Even sipping tea is served by hotel the physiotherapists.
3. The seashore tent we enjoyed the fragrant oil and Chinese massage. (photo courtesy of Nansha Grand Hotel)
- 4-7. Decoration and setting reflect the hotel's focus of keeping a balanced life.
8. Sole massage beside the swimming pool. (photo courtesy of Nansha Grand Hotel)
9. Tasting tea in the garden.
- 10-11. Don't think it must be expensive to enjoy a feast at the hotel's Chinese restaurant, a baked cake of egg and Chinese onion only costs 6 yuan.

Nansha Grand Hotel

Add: No. 1, 2nd South Trade Road, New Coastal City, Nansha, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province 511458

Tel: (20) 3930 8888 Fax: (20) 3930 8899 Website: www.nanshahotel.com

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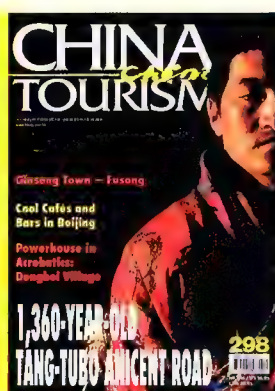
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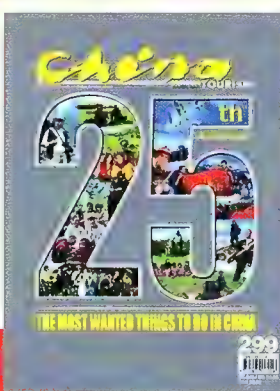
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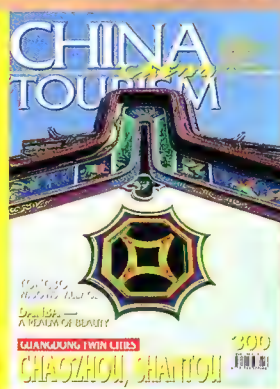
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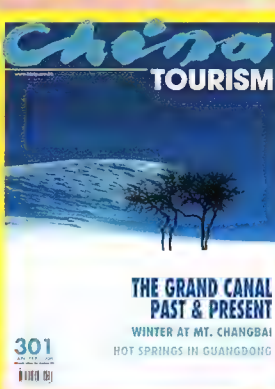
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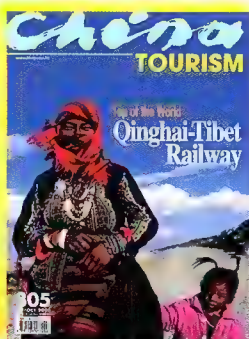
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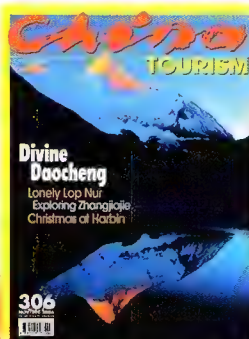
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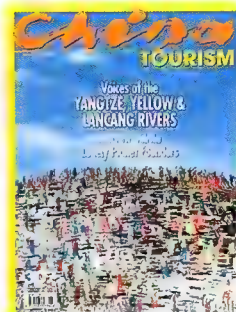
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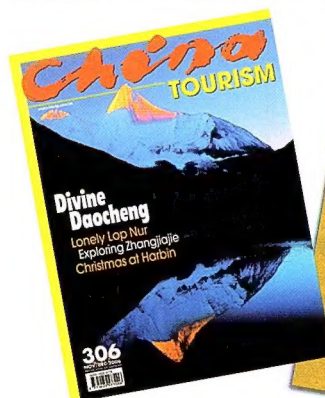
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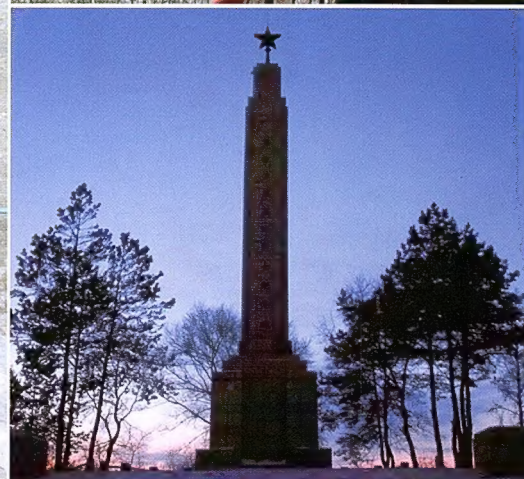
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corner of China is where the first place in the country which the sun can be seen everyday. The flatland composed of Heilongjiang, Songhuajiang, and Wusuli rivers is the largest wetland of the country. Our reporters welcome you to experience the journey to Northeast China.

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The construction of the Three Gorges Dam has reached to its final stage. Rising water level has already covered lots of ancient villages and historical monuments. How does the recent Three Gorges look like and what is the change of the locals' life? Photographer Zheng Yunfeng shows the readers his new experience there.



Discoveries

Tibet Fragrant Incense

The fragrant incense is the most traditional product used by the Tibetans. Going deep in Tibet, the author has visited the fragrant incense plants to get an insight of the making and composition of the incense. In fact, this is one of the most important Tibetan cultures which is worthy protected by all Chinese.

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